

# THAT DOWDY

BY MRS GEORGIE SHELDON





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# That Dowdy

*By* MRS. GEORGIE SHELDON

AUTHOR OF

"The Forsaken Bride," "Geoffrey's Victory," "The  
Golden Key," "He Loves Me for Myself,"  
"Helen's Victory," etc.



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THAT DOWDY

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# THAT DOWDY

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## CHAPTER I.

### A FATHER'S THREAT.

"Allan, do be reasonable——"

"Reasonable!"

"Yes; do you not understand? My hands are tied, my funds so locked up and depleted by bad debts and failures, that I shall be utterly swamped unless I have immediate help."

"Why don't you seek help, then, from some of your many friends?"

"I have sought it, but, somehow, everybody seems to comprehend that I am in a tight place; so excuses are plenty and slip very glibly from their tongues. If I can only have funds to tide me over the next three months, I shall come out all right—I shall be saved."

"Well, Gertie is your ward, her fortune is under your absolute control, why don't you use some of it to help you out of your difficulties?"

"Because I dare not. My sense of honor will not allow me to appropriate money to which I have no legal right."

"Humph! Your sense of honor does not seem to hinder you from being willing to sacrifice your only son to your necessities, from forcing him against his will to marry a hoyden in her teens—an unformed girl, with no claims to beauty or culture, and nothing to recommend her to a man's favor except her money."

"But she worships the very ground you walk on."



"Um—I'm sorry, for her sake, that I cannot reciprocate her adoration."

"She may improve with time."

"Yes, and she may not. Bah! father, this is too bad of you. Gertrude is not fit to be married yet. She is hardly more than a child, a very unattractive one at that—an overgrown lump of humanity, painfully awkward in every movement, covered, with freckles, and a crazy shock of red hair."

"Auburn—not red, Allan."

"Auburn sounds better, I admit, but I am not color-blind, father; if there was ever a red head set upon a pair of shoulders, Gertrude Wynn has one upon hers, and I detest freckles and red hair. Would you have picked out such a wife for yourself at my age, *mon pere?*"

The elder gentleman colored, and hitched uncomfortably in his chair at this sarcastic inquiry, for Robert Livingstone had been noted for his fastidiousness in his younger days, and had won for his wife the beauty and belle of the fashionable circle in which he had moved.

"But, Allan, I must have money, or I shall go to smash, and everything will fall under the auctioneer's hammer," he said, evading a direct reply.

"Ask Gertie to lend it to you, then."

"She has no right to do that. Her father's will gives her no control over her property until she is twenty-one, unless she marries previous to that. But if you become her husband, you become also her legal protector, you can assume control of her fortune and lend me any amount. Just give me a lift in this extremity, and I will return every dollar that I borrow."

"Really, father, I think I should feel very mean to become a partner in any such scheme. I recoil from marrying the girl for such a purpose, when I have nothing—not even a heart—to offer in return."

"Have you set your heart on any one else, Allan?" asked his father, with some anxiety, and searching the young man's face with a keen look.

"No," he said, coloring; "I have yet to meet the woman whom I should choose to make Mrs. Allan Livingstone."

The elder gentleman heaved a sigh of relief at this assurance.

"I say, father," the son continued, after reflecting for several minutes, "it is preposterous—an unheard-of thing! I am but just out of college; I have set my heart upon being a physician, and there are three or four years more of hard study before me ere I can settle down to my profession; it seems senseless, even cruel, to hamper myself with a wife."

"Your own plans are of more consequence to you, then, than my honor as a business man," said Mr. Livingstone, looking white and stern.

"No," replied Allan, with a start, and losing all his own color. "I'll gladly forego my season of study abroad and enter the office of some good physician at home, and you can have the little fortune that Aunt Rhoda left me to finish my studies; that is well thought of; take it, father, and use it to help you out of your difficulties," he concluded, brightening.

Mr. Livingstone smiled a bitter, curious smile; then, rising, went to his desk, took out a package of papers, and threw them upon the table before his son, saying tersely:

"Those will give you some idea of what my liabilities are."

Allan Livingstone slipped off the rubber band that held them together and began to study them.

Not a word was spoken for a long time, Mr. Livingstone sitting with bowed head, and apparently lost in troubled thought over his business embarrassments.

At last his son looked up with a blank face.



"So much?" he asked, in a grave, surprised voice.

"You perceive that our Aunt Rhoda's small legacy would be but a drop in the bucket," said his father.

"Yes; it could do you no good."

"Will you marry Gertie?"

"Father, I cannot; my whole nature revolts from such a measure."

"Very well," returned Mr. Livingstone in a dogged tone and with a look that gave his son an inward shock.

"What am I to understand by that, sir?"

"That I shall never meet the ruin and disgrace which will follow the protesting of my first note."

"Father!"

The elder man made no reply to this horrified exclamation. He only lifted a pair of sullen, desperate eyes, and gazed steadfastly at his son.

"You cannot mean anything so dreadful—so sinful as that," Allan said in an awed tone.

"The Livingstones have always stood first in the country; no taint has ever touched their proud name; they have never known the meaning of the word poverty; their families have never lacked any good thing that they wished. Do you think I can bear to be the first to have the finger of scorn pointed at me—to see the red flag wave over this roof, and strangers come to take possession of the home of my ancestors? Do you think I can bear to see my wife hurled from the proud position she has always occupied into a state of obscurity and destitution—her own fortune swept into the vortex with mine—driven from her beautiful home and deprived of the luxuries to which she has been accustomed from infancy? I cannot bear it, Allan—I will not."

He spoke slowly, deliberately, as if every word was weighed, and his son knew that his purpose was as fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians.



For fully five minutes afterward, Allan Livingstone sat with bowed head and a pale, troubled face.

At last he looked up, and met again those sullen, desperate eyes.

"Have your way. I will marry your ward," he said briefly.

"My son!" exclaimed his father in an eager tone, his eyes lighting, that set look fading from his face, those tense lines about his mouth relaxing into a fond, gratified smile.

Allan Livingstone's lips curled. He had always looked up to his father with a kind of fond admiration; he had esteemed him as a man above reproach, and he had never until this moment realized that there was a weak spot in his character, or dreamed that such selfishness could exist in his nature.

"Yes, I will marry your ward," he repeated coldly, "to save you from the sin that you meditate—provided," he added, with bitter sarcasm, "she will allow me the honor. Let it be when you will, arrange it as you will; but the day that consummates your purpose, I leave for Europe. I will not sacrifice all the hopes of my life. I will fit myself for the profession that I have chosen. Besides that, I will not remain here to live a lie, and I will not profit by so much as a dollar from the property of a wife thus wedded."

"There, there, Allan," said his father soothingly, "you will get over all such squeamish ideas by and by. Gertie has more money than she could ever spend. Her income is a royal one, and has been accumulating during the years of her childhood, and she would be amazed if I should tell her how much she is worth. I am sure I do not know who should profit by it if not the son of her father's most cherished friend, and by this marriage I shall be enabled to set myself up all right again, and without compromising my honor in any way."

"Your honor! It does not appear to interfere with your gaining your ends at the sacrifice of the happiness of your son," Allan retorted bitterly.

Mr. Livingstone colored again.

"You are rather hard on me, my boy, but take my word for it, there will come a time when you will thank me for what you now blame me," he said, quickly recovering his self-possession, now that the dreadful burden that had pressed upon him so heavily was lifted from his heart.

Allan looked skeptical.

"When will you have the sacrifice offered?" he asked.

His father bit his lip, and a flash of anger sprang into his eyes; then he replied quietly and as if he had not been stung by the query:

"You will be twenty-one in just a month; let the marriage take place upon your birthday. You can then transfer to me the power of attorney—that is, if you intend to persist in your determination to go abroad——"

"Which I do," interrupted his son emphatically.

"I wish you could make up your mind to pursue your studies at home; there are as eminent physicians in this country as in any other, while——"

"While there will be no end of gossip, I suppose you were going to remark, regarding my hasty marriage and sudden departure. Yes, I confess I think it will have something of the appearance of fortune-hunting," interposed Allan as his father hesitated.

"Oh, no," Mr. Livingstone returned placidly. "I was not thinking of that, because, you know, it has always been taken for granted that you and Gertie would marry sometime, and I do not know as any one would consider it very strange that you should wish to secure your prize before going away from home to be absent so long. I was thinking, however, that it



might not be using the child just right to run away from her so soon."

"It will be the greatest kindness that I could show her," said Allan, with passionate vehemence, "for she would be sure to discover my repugnance to such a union should I remain at home. At all events I shall go," he concluded decidedly.

"Are you agreeable to the fourth of next month?" inquired his father.

"As agreeable to that as to any date."

"Will you attend to the necessary preliminaries with Gertrude?"

"That will be unavoidable, I suppose. One ought not to expect to win so fair a bride and so large a fortune without certain forms and ceremonies, I suppose."

"I hope you will not always cherish such bitter feelings toward me, Allan," said Mr. Livingstone with a sigh.

"I consider that you have taken an unfair advantage of me, sir. You compel me to do one of two things—ruin my own life or become indirectly responsible for a crime from which any one would shrink with abhorrence."

"You do not appear to consider your mother at all—what she would suffer from being deprived of all the elegancies and luxuries which have become absolute necessities to her."

"My mother should never want for anything while I had strength and ability," Allan returned in a softened tone.

"She would suffer, nevertheless. She would know that her husband was bankrupt; she would be compelled to give up her home, her horses, carriages, her position in society, and many things which no amount of effort on your part could provide for her."

"I do not believe those things would weigh in the

balance at all with her when compared with her son's happiness, or the meanness of marrying an unsuspecting girl simply for her money. Suppose we submit the question to her?"

"No, no; not for the world. She must know nothing about these matters," said Mr. Livingstone, greatly disturbed by the suggestion.

"Father, why will you not face your business troubles in a manly fashion and begin the world over again, if need be? I will do all I can to help you; do not be guilty of using this underhanded method to brace yourself up."

"Because—I will not," said Mr. Livingstone, a dull, angry red mounting to his brow. "You have given me your word; you shall not fail me now, Allan," he added, with evident trepidation.

"No, I will not fail you, but—the consequences be upon your own head," replied the young man, as, with a white, set face and haughty mien, he arose and stalked from the room.

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## CHAPTER II.

### "THAT DOWDY."

The Livingstones of The Elms had, for many generations, been regarded as the wealthiest and most aristocratic family in the county where they resided, and of which they owned no inconsiderable portion. They were exceedingly high-toned, priding themselves upon their culture and refinement, their stainless name and unimpeachable integrity.

Robert Livingstone, Esquire, the present incumbent of The Elms, had sustained the reputation of his ancestors up to the present time; but the embarrassments usually attending a pecuniary panic in the country,

added to reckless expenditure and extravagant living, had served to place him in a very precarious position, and now, in the very prime of his life, and apparently at the zenith of prosperity, he found himself upon the verge of bankruptcy.

His haughty spirit refused to meet the disgrace and humiliation of being hurled from his proud position, and of dragging out his future in poverty and obscurity; and he conceived and eagerly grasped at the project of uniting his son in marriage with his wealthy ward, Gertrude Wynn, whose large fortune would enable him to extricate himself from all financial difficulties.

The Wynns were also an old and substantial family. Old Colonel Wynn had served in the Mexican War with great distinction; was a man of strong character and large wealth and a valued friend of Robert Livingstone's father. This intimacy had been kept up by the next generation, the colonel's son, Archibald, and Robert Livingstone forming a strong attachment for each other in boyhood, which lasted until the death of the former.

Archibald Wynn had gone abroad upon the completion of his college course, and his friend did not see him again for long years. He heard of his marriage, however, to a beautiful woman whom he met during his roving, after which all communications between them ceased for a time; and it was not until Archibald suddenly presented himself before Robert Livingstone in his home, a sad and broken-down man, and bringing with him his little daughter of ten years, that his old friend learned of the sorrow that had wrecked his life and made him an old man before his time.

He had lost his wife when his little girl was but two years of age, he told the world; and, seeing the look of settled grief upon his white face, every one forbore to question him concerning his heavy affliction.



But to his friend he told all the sad story.

"It has ruined my life," he said; "it has broken my heart, and I have grieved and rebelled until I have worn myself out, and I know I have not long to live. I have come back to leave my child in your care, if you will assume the responsibility, for I have no relatives, and I cannot bear the thought of her falling among strangers. Give her every advantage; make her life a happy one if you can and there will be plenty of money, if that will serve the purpose; but do not—do not ever tell her, if you can avoid it, *how she lost her mother!* Say that we were in England when the blow fell, and that I, her father, lived only for her after I lost my wife. Promise me, my friend, to shield her from the grief of knowing what I have told you; rear her as you would your own daughter—and may Heaven bless you accordingly!"

And Robert Livingstone promised all that his friend asked—promised to shield and protect the forlorn little stranger, to care for her as if she were his own, and do everything in his power to make her future a happy and useful one, and that the blight that had fallen upon her father, withering every hope of his life, should never touch her if it was in his power to prevent it.

But poor Gertrude Wynn was destined to experience the greatest sorrow of her life through the violation of that pledge which Robert Livingstone had solemnly given to her father and his friend.

She was not an attractive child, as has already been intimated. She was large for her age, very fleshy, and with no symmetry of form—a "lump of humanity," as Allan Livingstone, in his hot anger, had called her. Her features were regular and good, or would have been but for her superabundance of flesh; but her skin was wretched, being covered with freckles from exposure to the sun and wind, and her hair was like a tawny red mane, and always in a state of disorder dreadful to behold.

The only redeeming feature about her was her eyes, which were large and full, and a beautiful blue-gray in color; they were very expressive, too, betraying every emotion which animated her young heart. But even they did not count for much when she was so unprepossessing in every other respect, and she was pronounced painfully homely by almost every one who knew her. She had a lovely disposition, however; she was like a sunbeam in the house, and Mrs. Livingstone soon grew to love the motherless girl almost as well as if she had been her own daughter. She did all that she could to modify her plainness, by dressing her tastefully, by trying to teach her habits of neatness and gracefulness of manner. But the child was brimful of pranks and mischief, caring little for dress and less for the proprieties of life. She seemed to delight only in play—in romping, rowing on the river, riding on her fleet-footed pony, and having a good time in general. One talent she possessed, however, the gift of song, and her clear, fresh young voice could be heard at almost any hour of the day trilling notes of melody that were very rare in one so young.

Allan Livingstone was a boy of fifteen when she came into his home, and from the first she betrayed a strong attachment for him, while he, having no sisters and pitying the forlorn little stranger, soon grew to be quite fond of her in a brotherly sort of way, and allowed her to share in his own pursuits and pleasures.

They galloped over the hills together, they rowed upon the river—the beautiful, picturesque Hudson—roamed through the woods and fields that lay all about The Elms, studied the same books, sang the same songs, and were thoroughly good friends.

In Gertrude's opinion there was no boy in all the world like Allan, and every year that she spent in his home only served to make her more fond and proud of him.

She was almost heartbroken when, at the age of seventeen, he went away from home to college. The days seemed endless; the earth lost half its beauty, the river its power to charm; her rides were lonely and monotonous, and everything seemed wrong.

But all was changed, and she grew happy as the birds again whenever he returned for his long vacation and they resumed their old-time pleasures.

Gertrude had never appeared to give a thought to her own personal appearance, until one day, during one of these vacations, when she and Allan went away to the country fair together, and her attention was called to it in a peculiar and forcible way.

She was fourteen, and just at that awkward age when even pretty girls appear at a disadvantage; while, thinking more of her own enjoyment than anything else, she paid but very little attention to any outward adornment that would help to make her more attractive.

They were in the horticultural department, standing by a collection of roses which they had been admiring, when Gertrude heard a voice near by ask:

"Who is that handsome young fellow with that dowdy-looking girl?"

"Hush!" came the response in a lower tone, yet loud enough for Gertrude's startled ears: "that is Allan Livingstone, the son of one of our first families, and the girl is Gertrude Wynn, his father's ward; but she's very rich, if she is homely."

"Rich! Well, I should want to be rich if I had to have such a hideous red head and be as speckled as a tiger lily. She's a perfect fright, and there's no more shape to her than there is to a barrel," was the stinging retort.

Gertrude had caught every word, but she hoped Allan had not.

She might be a "dowdy" and a "fright," but she



could not bear to be called so before him, and a sudden bitter pain shot through her heart at the thought of being depreciated in his estimation.

She knew that she had red hair and that her face was badly freckled, but she wondered if she were really so dreadfully homely as this pretty girl—for she was pretty and stylish, and had a certain high-bred air about her that was very taking—seemed to consider her.

But she was plucky, and she was bound she would not show how badly she had been hurt, and she did not believe Allan had heard, for he did not look as if he had; so she threw up her head a trifle, just to show those girls that she did not care, and began to chatter as fast as she could about a pot of lovely Marechal Niel roses that were just opening.

But Allan had heard, and he knew that Gertrude had, as well. A bright flush flew into his cheeks, and he shot a glance of indignation at the rude girls behind them, and then called her attention to something else farther down the room, while he took good care that they did not encounter those young critics again.

The next day they went rowing on the river, when Gertrude suddenly dropped her oar and leaned over the side of the boat to look at her reflection in the water.

She gazed long and thoughtfully at herself, and evidently the contemplation was not a pleasing one; for, after a time, she heaved a deep sigh, and, turning to Allan, asked plaintively:

“What is a—dowdy, Allan?”

“Pshaw! Gertie, don’t mind what those vicious girls said yesterday,” he returned, but coloring slightly at her question.

“Oh, you heard, then!” she said, eyeing him curiously.

“Yes and I could have boxed their ears soundly; it

is downright mean to criticise people in such a public place."

"But I guess I am horrid—though I never had thought much about it before. I *am* speckled as a—trout"—she could not use the comparison she had heard the previous day—"and my hair is red, and—I wish I didn't look quite so—so like a 'dowdy,' as she said," the young girl answered, with a wistful glance at her companion.

"Pooh! What nonsense!"

"Well, but I am very homely; don't—don't you think so? Be honest, Allan," and her large blue-gray eyes searched his face gravely.

It was rather a close corner for the youth.

"I can't honestly call you a beauty, Gertie," he said, flushing, "but what of that when you're so thoroughly nice every other way?"

"Am I really?—how?" she asked eagerly, her eyes brightening.

"Why, you're tiptop company, for one thing; we always have the jolliest times together; and then you are always so good-natured and obliging one can't help liking you first-rate."

Gertrude's face grew rosy with delight.

"I would do anything in the world for you, Allan," she said earnestly; "but don't my looks make any difference with you?"

"Of course not; I never stop to think about them."

"Don't you? Then I'll try not to any more," but a regretful sigh concluded the sentence, and she did not refer to the subject again.

She could not forget it, however, and tried to keep herself a little more tidy while Allan remained at home, and Mr. Livingstone really began to hope she was mending her ways; but she soon fell into her disorderly habits again after his departure, and was so careless of her complexion, going out unprotected in

all kinds of weather, and took so little pains in the arrangement of her hair and dress, that the years did not tend to improve her appearance, and at the age of sixteen, when Allan graduated and our story opened, she was anything but an attractive maiden in looks, although she was still the same kind and genial companion as of yore.

Allan was just as fond of her then, in a brotherly fashion, as he had ever been, and he never would have allowed himself to speak of her in the way he did to his father if he had not been driven to it in a moment of anger.

As he was passing through the hall after leaving his father, he heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs, and, glancing out of the open door, he saw Gertrude galloping up the avenue, her fiery hair flying on the breeze, her hat perched carelessly on the back of her head, her freckled face flushed and hot with exercise she had been taking, and her long habit rendered extremely untidy by a huge rent which had been made by its catching upon the pickets of a low fence that she had jumped in taking a short cut home.

She dashed up to the door, threw her bridle to the groom, who came forward to take her horse, and then sprang to the ground as nimbly and fearlessly as the most expert horseman could have done.

Her eyes lightened with pleasure as she ran up the steps and saw Allan in the hall, then as suddenly darkened again when she noticed his pale and moody face.

"Why, Allan, what is the trouble?" she questioned, bounding to his side and laying her hand upon his arm.

"Trouble! What do you mean?" he questioned evasively.

"Why, you look as if the dearest hope of your life had been suddenly and eternally blighted. I never saw such a *solemncholy* face," she returned, laughing, yet searching his countenance with keen, earnest eyes.



"I'll take time by the forelock," Allan said, with sudden resolution. "I'll settle that business at once, and have it over with."

Then he said aloud, turning to her:

"Go take off that torn dress, Gertie; then come and walk with me under the elms—I have something I wish to say to you."

"Oh, never mind the dress; I can take it up," she responded indifferently, and with a kick of her foot and one swoop of her hand, she swung it up over her arm, thus hiding the rent, but making of herself a more grotesque figure than before, if that were possible.

Allan did not urge the dress question further; he was too thoroughly heartsick to give it more than a passing thought; so he turned and led the way out of the house, down under the wide-spreading, over-arching elms which had been the pride of the Livingstones for more than a century, and where Gertrude Wynn was to face her future and settle her fate.

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## CHAPTER III.

### ALLAN'S PROPOSAL.

The young girl followed, wondering what could have happened to make her usually delightful companion look so grave and appear so unlike himself.

"Well, Allan," she said gently, after a long interval of silence, during which they had walked some distance from the house.

He looked up, started, flushed.

"Gertie, I am going away next month," he began.

"Away? Where?"

"To France, to study for my profession; it has been decided to-day."

"Well?"

"I shall be gone three—perhaps four years."

The girl's face grew very white, and the muscles of her throat twitched convulsively, as if she had with difficulty restrained a sob; then her lips settled into a straight, resolute line.

"It has been your ambition to become a skillful physician, and of course it will take time to fit you for it," she said gently.

"I know it; but, Gertie, I have a question that I must ask you before I go."

She caught her breath quickly at that; her head drooped; a tender, yet half-frightened light shot into her eyes, and her lips trembled with emotion.

Allan saw nothing of it, however. He was looking straight before him; his own eyes were stern and gloomy; his whole face full of pain, but resolute.

"Gertrude," he continued, after a brief pause, and speaking with dry, parched lips, "you once told me that you would do anything for me——"

"Yes, and I will; I meant it," she interposed in a low, eager tone.

"Then—will you marry me before I go away?"

"Marry you!" she repeated mechanically and in an astonished tone.

"Yes."

"But—I am so very young—only just sixteen!"

"I know it; I am afraid you are too young to know your own heart yet; too young to judge whether you would be happy or miserable as my wife; but——"

"Oh, I did not mean that!" Gertrude cried impulsively; "I could be happy with you, Allan, under any circumstances; but"—another burning blush suffused her face—"I meant I was very young to be—married."

Allan turned to look at her.

Her lips were quivering, her eyes were dewy, her

chest heaved almost convulsively, and she was shivering with excitement.

She had said she "could be happy with him under any circumstances!" but he knew she did not take into consideration the fact that she might be an unloved wife. He knew her faith in him was so great that she did not dream that he would ask her to marry him from any but the purest of motives, and he despised himself for the deception he was practicing. For the moment, he half determined to throw up the whole miserable business and take himself off immediately to Paris.

But that wretched, though indirect, threat uttered by his father still rang in his ears, and filled him with inexpressible horror. Ruin and disgrace hung, like a two-edged sword, over his parents, his home, and his hitherto untarnished name.

A sudden resolution took possession of him. He reached down, took Gertrude's hand and drew it gently through his arm.

"I will tell her the truth, at least as much of it as I may," he said to himself, "and it shall be just as she wills. She shall not be led wholly blindfolded into a union which she may afterward regret and despise."

"Gertie," he said, "I know this proposition must seem very strange to you, and I am going to explain why I have made it just now. I know that it would have been more proper if I had waited until later—until my return, perhaps; but certain circumstances have transpired which seem to make it necessary that I should speak now, and if we both feel sure of our own minds, perhaps it will not make so very much difference, after all. My father is in financial difficulty," he went on, "and though he has tried in every way to extricate himself, ruin seems to stare him in the face. Only one thing remains for him to do—to borrow of you for a little while——"

"Why, yes, of course," Gertrude interrupted heartily, yet wondering what Mr. Livingstone's financial troubles could have to do with her marrying Allan. "I know that I have plenty of money," she added, "and I am sure he is welcome to as much as he needs."

Allan smiled slightly.

"Of course," he returned, "we felt very sure you would be willing to assist him; but, unfortunately, you have now no power in the matter; you have no control over your money until you are of age, or—marry."

"But he is my guardian—he has control of my fortune; let him use what he needs," she said, after a moment of thought.

"That, too, would be impossible, for he has no right to touch one dollar of it, except in your interest."

"But—he has a right to pay himself for his services—for his care of me."

"True," Allan answered, surprised at the thought she exercised, "but not to any such extent as he requires—that would be downright robbery. And so, Gertie, since he has always hoped that we two might care enough for each other to marry sometime, he consulted me to-day regarding the adoption of this measure, asking me to hasten it if I could, and thus give him the help he needs in his trouble. At first I rebelled—you see I am speaking very plainly—I felt as if it would be taking a mean, unfair advantage of you to ask you to marry me with any such purpose in view, even if, for other reasons, you were not averse to such a union, without telling you the truth. It seemed like marrying you simply for your money. My father owes thousands of dollars; absolute ruin hangs over him, and he can get no help from any one, although he has been trying for months. You have no power to loan him a dollar of your property, as you are a minor; but as my wife, there would be no difficulty in arranging it. Still——"



He stopped short.

"Still what, Allan?" Gertrude asked in a strange, unnatural tone.

"Still, I would not urge this step upon you if it is in the least repugnant to you. If you shrink from it—if such a tie would make you unhappy—if you do not love me well enough to become my wife, Gertrude, I would not for the world have you do anything that you might afterward regret."

He spoke very gently, even tenderly, for his manly heart was full of pity for her—so gently and tenderly that the young girl's heart thrilled at his tone. Allan had always been her ideal—Allan was her hero; there was no one like him in all the world. He was handsome, manly, kind, and generous. She knew him through and through, and she had loved him very dearly ever since she had come, a lonely, almost friendless child, into his home.

But not until this hour had she fully realized what this love meant. Hitherto, if she had been called upon to analyze it, she would have said she regarded him as a brother; now, however, she knew that it was the one absorbing passion of her life; that, in that brief interview, she had changed from a gay, thoughtless, romping girl into a loving, worshiping woman, whose whole future was bound up in the man by her side.

She lifted her face and looked full into his eyes. His were filled with pitiful kindness, for he was only too keenly conscious that he was doing her a great wrong; indeed, he almost forgot himself and his aversion to the marriage in the guilt that he experienced for the deception which he was practicing upon the unsuspecting girl. She believed that look meant love and yearning for her, and the flood of happiness that poured into her soul was too much for her composure; and, before Allan was aware of it, she had dropped her

head upon his shoulder, and burst into a passion of tears.

## CHAPTER IV.

### BETHROTHAL AND MARRIAGE.

Almost unconsciously Allan slipped his arm about her waist, to support her until the violence of her excitement should subside.

His heart had leaped at the sight of her tears, for he almost hoped they were the precursor of a rejection of his suit, though what the effect of such a refusal would be upon his father he had not courage to consider.

"Gertie," he said, when at length her sobs began to subside, "remember that you are perfectly free to decide this matter as you will. Do not for a moment be influenced by a thought of obligation, or that you must assent to the arrangement to help your guardian out of his troubles."

"Oh, no," she replied, with a long sigh, and lifting her shining eyes to him. "I could not assent to it at all, if—if I did not love you dearly, Allan. And you—do you love me?—do you wish it to be so, Allan?"

"Yes, Gertrude,"

She flushed.

Somehow that quiet, repressed answer jarred upon her.

"Of course I know that you must feel some affection for me, for we have lived together so long," she said quickly, "but I mean, do you love me as well as—as any girl whom you have ever seen?"

"I love you better than any girl I have ever seen, Gertie," he answered, looking gravely down into her anxious eyes, and he meant it; but, oh! it was not with a lover's love, for all that.

"In spite of my red hair, my freckles, and—everything?"

"Yes, in spite of 'everything,' as you put it, Gertie, you are the dearest girl I know."

She heaved a long sigh of content.

"Then I shall do just as you wish," she said, her eyes drooping with confusion, a shy yet tender smile hovering around her mouth.

Allan Livingstone bent and touched her flushed forehead with his lips. He was so sorry for her that, strong man though he was, he could have almost wept for her and for the sacrifice that she was making of her fresh young heart, although she did not realize it as such. He resolved that she should never be undeceived, if he could help it—that he would do his utmost to make her life a peaceful, if not a supremely happy one.

"Thank you, Gertie; but are you sure you are making no mistake regarding the feelings of your own heart?" he asked earnestly.

"Quite sure; but oh, Allan, must you go away?" she asked, suddenly remembering what he had said about going to Paris.

"It is better that I should."

"Why 'better'?"

"Because you are very young—far too young to assume the duties of a wife as yet—your education is not completed, and you should be left untrammelled for years yet. It would have been better for both of us if we could have waited until my return before taking such an important step."

"Tell me why, Allan?"

"Gertie," he said, in an unsteady voice, "I feel almost guilty at having won this promise from you, and I am afraid you are even too young to be sure you would choose me from all the world as your husband."

She clasped both hands—they were small, plump,

prettily shaped hands, too, in spite of their freckles—about his arm, and looked trustfully up into his face.

“Allan,” she said, with startling earnestness, “I *know* that I love you. If I should wait ten, twenty years, you would occupy the first place in my heart; nothing will ever change my love for you, no matter what happens, and I am so content, so happy in knowing that I am to be your wife, that I believe this hour would almost make up to me for years of sorrow.”

“What a positive assertion that was, and what a fond heart you have, dear,” Allan returned, smiling slightly, but with a tinge of pain as he realized how little he could give her for so much.

“But about my going away,” he went on, “you know that my heart has been set upon it for a great while. I must have some profession—something to occupy me in the future, for I cannot live an aimless life—and I can be fitted for it in Paris better than in any other city in the world. Therefore I propose to leave the fourth of next month, to be gone three or four years; meantime you——”

“Yes, I will truly, Allan. I know what you were going to say,” Gertrude interrupted hastily, and coloring, “that I must study, too, and try to get a good education. But I do not like it. I’d a great deal rather ride ‘Brown Bess’ or row upon the river. I believe I almost hate study, and I don’t like to sew or keep house; but if I am to be married, I suppose I must begin to learn all about such things, and I will really try for your sake. But,” she continued, after a moment, and flushing scarlet, “if you are going on the fourth, when—when——”

“When will the important day arrive for us?” Allan supplemented for her. “Let it be that very day, Gertie—the fourth,” he continued. “We will be quietly married in the morning. I shall leave on the



evening train for New York, and sail for Europe at noon on the following day."

Gertrude clasped his arm more closely, and grew pale and quiet.

Her heart was filled with a deep, wild joy, for she was to be Allan Livingstone's wife, and she would have the right to love him as fondly as she chose. She was to belong to him, and he to her. Could her soul contain so much happiness? And yet it was shadowed by the thought of parting so soon.

"Does the arrangement I have mentioned please you, Gertrude?" Allan asked, beginning to feel that he must put an end to the trying interview.

"It shall be just as you like, Allan," Gertrude answered gently.

"Very well; then I will speak to my father and mother, and they will see that all necessary arrangements are made."

"And will Mr. Livingstone's troubles be all over then? Can I give him as much money as I like?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, with my consent; for I shall become your legal protector and guardian after that. But, Gertie," Allan added, his face darkening, "it seems very mercenary to me to urge this hasty marriage for such a purpose; maybe, sometime in the future, you will regret it, and accuse me of having married you for your money."

"Allan, I love you too well ever to say anything so disagreeable as that to you, or about you," the young girl answered gravely. "And," she added, "I believe I do not care very much about it—the money—anyway, only for what it can do toward making us happy; and Mr. Livingstone is more than welcome to what he needs."

So this strange wedding was appointed for the fourth of September.

Mr. Livingstone was very much gratified that it had been arranged with so little trouble, while he seemed like a different man. His heavy brow cleared, and he entered into the preparations for the approaching nuptials with great interest and eagerness.

This was very gratifying to his wife, who, although she was not aware of the extent of her husband's business troubles, knew something of what had caused his anxiety and melancholy, and she had worried considerably over his condition, both mental and physical. Still she did not exactly approve of the contemplated marriage.

"The child is too young," she objected, when talking it over with Mr. Livingstone.

"I know she is rather young," he admitted, "but they are very fond of each other, you know. Allan insists upon going abroad, and it is just as well for him to secure his prize before he leaves. It will help me out of a bad fix and prevent any one else from stepping in between them before he returns."

"Shall you think it necessary to tell Allan about that unfortunate affair abroad?" Mrs. Livingstone asked anxiously, after a thoughtful pause.

"No," returned her husband, with compressed lips, "that must remain a secret—her father made me promise that it should never touch her life if I could help it; and it could do Allan no good to know it."

"Still, he might blame you for keeping it from him, if, sometime, it should come to his ears."

"He need never discover it—no one knows anything about it but ourselves, and the secret will die with us; so let us say no more about it," and Mr. Livingstone left the room abruptly, evidently not caring to be interviewed further upon what was plainly a disagreeable topic.

Whatever the nature of the "secret" which he and his wife had been discussing might be, he had no

notion of imparting it to Allan and thus running a risk of having his marriage interrupted. There was too much at stake, and it had been too hard to gain his consent to the project at the outset.

Gertrude seemed greatly changed since her engagement. She had grown very quiet and seemed to have acquired a dignity and thoughtfulness very unusual to her; and yet she appeared very happy, though there was a shyness in her manner toward Allan which no one had ever noticed before.

He was kinder, gentler with her than of yore, for he recognized the fact that this change in her was caused by her deep love for him, and he was very pitiful, while the guilty feeling haunted him continually for the wrong he was doing her.

The wedding was to be very quiet. This Allan had insisted upon, and only the family and a select few of their friends were bidden to the ceremony.

Mrs. Livingstone did her best for her young charge. Her dress was simple as became her age, but very tastefully made, and yet, with all her efforts, Gertrude was not an attractive bride.

The ceremony was performed in the village church, a mile away, by the gray-haired, venerable rector, who himself marveled that a man of Mr. Livingstone's standing was willing to assume the responsibility of marrying this young girl, who was hardly more than a child, to his son under such peculiar circumstances. He had even some qualms of conscience about uniting them, being almost tempted to expostulate with them instead and advise them to wait until Allan's return from abroad.

Allan's manner and replies were mechanical, while his face was ghastly white.

He had not seen Gertrude that morning until he met her in the vestibule of the church, and then, though he tried to smile and greet her in a proper manner, she

cried out with sudden fear, while she searched his face with great, anxious eyes:

"Allan, are you ill? Oh, how white you are!"

"No, Gertie, not ill," he answered, in a low tone, as he clasped her hand and drew it within his arm. "I know I am pale, and so are you, but—this is an important day for us, you know."

That silenced her fears for the time, and she went to the altar on his arm with a heart full of love, and hope, and trust.

The breakfast afterward was not a very jolly affair, for both father and son went to it with the heaviest heart imaginable; while Mrs. Livingstone, though she did her best to entertain and make things move along smoothly, felt that something was very wrong—as if an invisible skeleton were present at the feast.

She was not sorry when it was over and the guests took their departure—all but two or three whom Mr. Livingstone had invited to remain to witness some documents that were to be signed before Allan's departure.

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## CHAPTER V.

### A SECRET DISCOVERED.

It was very difficult for Gertrude to imagine herself a married woman. True, she had stood up beside Allan and pledged herself for all time to him. The words of the service had seemed very solemn to her, and her whole heart had been in every one that she had uttered; but afterward it all seemed like a strange dream, and she could scarcely comprehend that she was Allan's wife, except that a slight influence of that impressive service still hung over her, and the pressure of that heavy circlet upon the third finger of her



left hand reminded her that she was no longer the free, unfettered maiden that she had been hitherto.

Then, too, it seemed so unreal to stand beside Allan at one end of the great parlors at home and be called "Mrs. Livingstone," to have people take her by the hand, congratulate her on her happiness, and wish her so much in the future with "her husband."

She was very quiet and shy through it all, and she was very happy, too, until it occurred to her that Allan was entirely unlike himself. He was very still, and that deadly pallor that had so startled her in the church yet remained upon his face, while there was about him a restraint and coldness, amounting to hauteur, that was very unnnatural.

She watched him furtively after that, and a strange sense of depression and fear began to creep into her heart. She tried to believe that this strangeness was caused by a feeling of sorrow and regret at the thought of the coming separation, and her own heart grew heavy with grief as the hour of parting drew nigh; but she felt that he should have been gentle and tender, instead of cold and reserved.

It made her uneasy, almost wretched, for instead of being drawn closer to him, as she had expected, by the tie that now united them, there seemed to be a gulf yawning between them, which every moment grew wider and deeper.

She told herself that it would be different after her guests were gone—that he was only holding himself in check for propriety's sake, and she did so long for a kind look—for one fond word from him.

Every one was gone at last—all but those two or three who had been asked to remain upon business—and Allan and his father went away to the library with them, and Mrs. Livingstone sent Gertrude to her room to have her bridal attire exchanged for a less elaborate dress.

The maid had a lovely, though simple, white nun's veiling laid out ready for her—Mrs. Livingstone would allow no color on that day—and Gertrude looked really well, for almost the first time in her life, when arrayed in it, with a great cluster of satin bows at her waist and another at the throat, and with those soft, delicate rouchings about her neck and wrists.

She gave utterance to a deep sigh of relief when she at last heard the gentlemen below take their leave, and knew that their tedious "business" was ended, for she believed that now she should have Allan all to herself and be happy for the few hours that remained before his departure.

With a tender smile on her lips and the light of a new joy shining in her eyes, she glided downstairs to find her husband. Mrs. Livingstone heard her coming, and went to meet her. She smiled as her glance fell upon her and she saw how well she was looking, and, passing around her, kissed her affectionately.

"My daughter," she whispered, "I hope you will be very, very happy."

At those fond words Gertrude lifted her arms and wound them about the beautiful woman's neck.

"Mother!" she said, in a low, thrilling tone. "I have never known any other—and I may call you that now—I love you—I love you, and I will try to be a good daughter to you."

Tears sprang into the elder woman's eyes, as she folded the girl close to her heart, and she was not sorry that the housekeeper spoke to her just then from the other end of the hall. She kissed her flushed cheek again, and said:

"I must speak with Mrs. Grant for a moment, dear, but I will come back presently. Go out upon the veranda, where it is cool, and sit down. The weather has been unusually warm, and you must be very tired, for this has been a trying day."

Gertrude glided out upon the veranda, her soft, white boots making no noise, going around to the north side, her favorite nook, for it overlooked the river, and where a hammock was swinging between the pillars in the tempting shade.

She sat down in it, and began to swing slowly back and forth, while her eyes wandered dreamily off to the opposite shore of the beautiful Hudson, which rose up before her like a grand, magnificent picture of many hues; for the foliage was beginning to turn, and every tree and shrub was looking its loveliest.

It was after four o'clock. At seven Allan was to go, and she would not see him again for three—perhaps four—years. For the first time she began to question the need and wisdom of this separation. She could not give him up—her love—her husband. She was his wife; why should she not go with him? She began to feel almost aggrieved that he had not suggested her accompanying him, when her musings were interrupted in a startling manner.

The library led out upon that side of the veranda by a long French window that was shaded in the summer time by green blinds. One of the blinds was closed now, though the window was open, and thus Gertrude was concealed from the view of any one who might be in the room, although the hammock was swung almost opposite the window. She had come there so quietly, and had been so absorbed in her thoughts, that Mr. Livingstone and Allan, who had been sitting in the library in awkward silence ever since the departure of the gentlemen who had witnessed some documents for them did not dream that any one was near them, or could overhear anything that they might say.

Suddenly Mr. Livingstone broke the painful stillness.

"Allan, I feel very blue, somehow, about your going; I wish you could give it up even now, though your

passage is paid. There is no need of your fitting yourself for any profession; there is money enough to enable you to live as you will. Stay and help me retrieve my fallen fortunes."

There was an ominous pause; then Allan turned upon his father with a vehemence and passion that made his young wife outside grow white and cold with pain and fear.

"Give up the hopes and ambition of a lifetime! Father, is there no limit to your selfishness?"

"But you are the only dependence I have—you are my only son."

Allan laughed aloud—a bitter, mocking laugh, that rang for years in the ears of that young bride, and it made her start and shiver as if a cold wave from some northern glacier had struck a chill to her very heart.

"‘Your only son!’ he repeated, with sarcastic emphasis; ‘all the dependence you have!’ Why, this very morning I gave you, in compliance with, or submission to, your wishes, the daughter whom you have so long craved, and with her the control of almost unlimited wealth. Is not that dependence enough? Are you not yet satisfied? Do you require still further sacrifice?"

"Allan, it was my only salvation—this marriage with Gertrude. Why will you be so bitter, so unforgiving toward me?"

"What do you care for my forgiveness?" Allan retorted, with increasing vehemence, his pent-up passion and sense of injury bursting all barriers at last. "You have accomplished your end; there is plenty of money for you to use to help you out of trouble; you can dip your hands as deeply as you choose into my wife's coffers, and no one will ever question your right to do so. Make the most of your victory, but do not ask me to give up the only comfort and enjoyment left me in life. I will not give up my study abroad! You have forced me, by an unmanly, cowardly threat, to marry a child—



for she is nothing more—an ignorant, unformed, unattractive girl!" he went on, with flaming face and a voice that shook with passion—"a veritable 'dowdy,' as I once heard some one call her——"

He stopped short, suddenly recalled to himself by a sense of shame at having allowed himself to utter such rude, ungentlemanly words—words which he had indignantly resented from another.

"I beg her pardon," he added in a remorseful tone, "I should not have said that—my anger against you has carried me beyond all bounds. But Gertrude is certainly unfortunate as to personal appearance, and it is evident we shall not be congenial in other respects; for she does not like study—she cares more for horses, and boats, and romping in the fields and woods than for the refinements of life, and she will never attain to much intellectually. I do not see, sir, after all that I have conceded to you, how you can have the face to ask me to give up my trip only to drag out a tortured existence at home."

"But," began his father in an injured tone.

"It is useless to discuss the matter," Allan interrupted. "I will not give up my plans. I shall go to France. I will fit myself for the very highest position it is possible to attain in my profession, and, when I can remain away no longer, I will return and strive to be content with my lot, by putting my knowledge to some good use."

"Very well, Allan, I have nothing more to say. Go if you will, but at least allow me to say that I trust time will serve to mitigate the ills which you so lament at present," Mr. Livingstone returned in a cold, offended tone, while at the same time he arose and passed out of the room.

As he went through the hall, he saw a white figure speeding across the lawn toward the river with rapid steps, but he was so absorbed in his own unpleasant

thoughts, so conscience-smitten by his son's passionate outburst and his evident misery, that he paid no attention to the circumstance until nearly an hour afterward, when Gertrude was missed and anxious inquiries made for her. Then he told his wife that he had seen her going down to the river.

Allan immediately went in search of her, for time was flying, and he had some last things he wished to say to her before he left—some advice regarding her studies and the cultivation of certain accomplishments, which as his wife he wished her to acquire.

He never once suspected that she had been an unintentional listener to those cruel sentences to which, in his passion and indignation against his father, he had given utterance, and which he deeply repented as soon as they were spoken.

He went down to the boathouse, and was greatly chagrined to find that her light boat was not in its place; but her handkerchief and some crushed and stemless flowers, which looked as if they had been plucked hastily and at random, lay upon the landing, showing him that she must have been there recently.

"It only goes to prove what I told my father, after all," he muttered, with a bitter accent; "she is nothing but a child, and absorbed in childish pleasures, and realizes so little her obligations and responsibilities that even on her wedding day and the eve of her husband's departure she cannot forego her customary amusements."

He looked up and down the river; but Gertrude's pretty boat was nowhere visible; neither could he catch the sound of dipping oars, though he listened intently for it.

He stood staring moodily at the water for several moments, the pain and sense of injury to his heart growing more and more keen; then he turned abruptly about and retraced his steps to the house.

At first he had thought he would take another boat and search for her, but gave up the idea at once.

"I should not know which way to go after her, so I will let her alone," he said angrily. "If she returns in season to say 'good-by' to me, well and good; if not—I can go without it."

Yet he was more pained and annoyed by her apparent thoughtlessness than he would have been willing to admit. It was mortifying and galling to think that his wife of only a few hours could not refrain from her favorite amusement at such a time, especially when he believed that she really loved him with all the strength of her young heart.

But could he have seen his poor little bride just then, rounding a bend of the river a quarter of a mile away, sitting rigidly erect in her boat, her face, but for those unsightly spots upon her skin, white as the dress in which she was clad; could he have seen those tightly compressed lips; those great blue-gray eyes, in which there shone an unspeakable agony; that corrugated brow and convulsively heaving chest, he would have known that no *penchant* for the water or simple childish enjoyment had sent her away like that, rowing up the river as if her very life depended upon the distance she could put between herself and Livingstone Elms.

Of course she had heard every word of the conversation between Allan and his father; every word of that cruel speech which was so unlike him, and which showed that he must have been goaded to the verge of desperation, or he never would have said such unkind things of her.

She had sat there stunned, spellbound, as he unconsciously revealed the true reason why he had married her. She understood, only too well, that he had been driven to the step to save his father from some dreadful

fate and in order to give him more complete control of her fortune.

She realized that he had no deep love for her, and that even the little fondness which he had previously entertained for her as a pleasant companion had been embittered or perhaps even rooted from his heart by being thus compelled to assume a nearer relation toward her. To him she was only a "child"—an ignorant unformed, unattractive girl, one who would never attain to much intellectually; while—yes, even to him—she was a "dowdy."

"I know it, I know it," her white lips said over and over, as, hearing Mr. Livingstone rise to leave the room, she sprang from the hammock and noiselessly sped from the veranda, putting her fingers in her ears, as if thus to shut out those hateful words which kept repeating themselves in her brain, every syllable beating upon her excited nerves with the force of a mighty hammer.

Blindly she rushed away to the river, unconsciously plucking off the heads of flowers which she brushed in passing, and which, with her handkerchief, she dropped where Allan had found them. With trembling hands she loosened her boat from its fastenings, and all unmindful of her delicate, pretty dress, sprang into it, seized the oars, and rowed away as if to escape some doom that seemed about to overtake her.

In the mansion the family were shocked and anxious over her absence, though no one appeared to suspect its cause. It was so strange, so thoughtless, so out of character for her to go away just at that time, and to stay so long; it was unpardonable.

Mrs. Livingstone was deeply wounded on her son's account, and meditated a severe reprimand for her new daughter when she should return. But it lacked only twenty minutes to seven when Gertrude finally made her appearance, her dainty dress stained, and splashed,



and bedraggled, her pretty boots ruined with mud and wet by a misstep in leaping from the boat, and her hair blowing wildly about her face, in which there was not an atom of color, and with such a look of suffering upon it and in her eyes as no one could fail to see and regard with pity.

Mrs. Livingstone's heart melted at once as she saw her.

"The poor child is grieved to death over Allan's departure, and has kept herself out of sight to conceal it," she said to herself.

But, nevertheless, she said reproachfully to her :

"Where have you been, Gertie? We have all been very anxious about you."

Gertrude glanced at her with a sort of dazed expression, but made no reply; then turned and leaned wearily against one of the pillars of the porch, and stood looking at the carriage that had just been driven to the door and which was soon to bear Allan away from her sight. He had been taking a light lunch, at his mother's request, but soon came out upon the veranda, his father following and looking very uncomfortable and miserable.

Gertrude did not move; she scarcely seemed to breathe, but every step that her husband took fell upon her heart like lead.

Allan took his mother in his arms for a last farewell.

She folded hers about his neck, and her tears fell thick and fast as she looked into his eyes and murmured a trembling blessing upon him.

"Do not grieve so, mother," he said unsteadily; "the years will soon pass, and meantime I shall write often."

He kissed her fondly, lingeringly, then put her gently aside and turned to his father.

He gave his hand in a formal way, and then, without a word, passed on to Gertrude.

Even then she did not move. She felt as if she was turning into a statue.

"Gertrude," said Allan, putting out his hand to her and speaking in a constrained tone, "I am sorry you were gone so long. I had some things that I wished to say to you before leaving, and there is no time—it can only be 'good-by' now."

Still she did not move. Still her stony gaze was fixed upon the carriage.

Allan looked puzzled.

He stepped closer, and touched her gently on the shoulder.

"Gertrude, have you no farewell for me?" he asked reproachfully.

At that tone she swung herself around and lifted her wild, agonized eyes to his.

He started as he looked into them and saw her changed face—so white, so rigid, so unutterably wretched.

"I believe you are sorry, after all," he said, trying to smile, and with a feeling of remorse for the hard things he had thought of her. "I began to think you did not care much about my going, if you could run away from me so."

He was unprepared for what followed.

A half sob, half groan burst from her colorless lips. She threw herself wildly upon his breast, winding her arms about his neck, clinging to him in a pitiful way.

"Oh, Allan! Allan! I am sorry for it all—sorry for everything," she cried in a broken voice.

He did not comprehend her meaning.

He thought that she was wretched because he was going, and the agony of her tone smote upon his heart, making him feel as if he had misjudged and wronged her.

He did not dream she meant that she was sorry for the step they had taken that day; sorry that she was his wife—that he was bound to one whom he regarded with indifference, almost contempt.

“Well, well, little girl,” he said soothingly and as he would have spoken to a younger sister, “do not take it so to heart. You must write to me every week. I will answer, and I shall have many entertaining things to tell you. There, dear; I must go. Good-by, and be as happy as you can.”

He lifted her face and dropped a kiss upon her forehead, turned away, and went down the steps.

“Little girl!”

She was a married woman and his wife, and she loved him with a love such as he knew nothing of. Yet he treated her like a child, promising her letters and entertaining news to reconcile her to his absence.

She straightened herself and stood haughtily erect, watching him while he gave some directions about the baggage, and then took his seat in the carriage.

All was ready; Allan waved another farewell to his mother, bent one lingering, somewhat troubled look upon his young wife; the driver gathered up his reins, spoke to the horses, and—he was gone.

Gertrude stood motionless until the carriage turned from the avenue into the main road; then, without a sound or warning, dropped senseless at Mr. Livingstone’s feet.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### A LETTER AND A SURPRISE.

Weeks of watching and anxiety followed Allan’s departure in the home of the Livingstones, for Gertrude lay very near death’s door; so near that Mrs. Livingstone feared that the first letter her son would receive

would tell him that his girl bride was dead; and what those weeks revealed, as the nearly heartbroken young wife raved in the wild delirium of brain fever, caused this anxious watcher more sorrow than she had ever before experienced. She learned that her husband had been guilty of a great wrong—that he had allowed his selfishness to outweigh every other consideration, and had thus sacrificed the happiness of two lives, in order to save his name from a fancied disgrace.

The poor child told the whole story little by little; how she had been so supremely happy upon her wedding day; how she had come down from her room, after the departure of the guests, hoping to spend those last few hours in fond communion with her husband; how she had thrown herself into the hammock upon the veranda, and there, behind that closed blind, overheard all that passed between Allan and his father.

Every time the doctor entered the sick room, he was greeted with these ravings. Gertrude would gaze at him wildly for a moment, and then burst into a shrill laugh.

"What do you come here for?" she would cry. "Don't you know I am an ignorant romp? I am an untrained colt, with a mane as r-r-r-red as fire—ugh! I'm like a tiger lily—a leopard—nothing can change my spots, and we can never be congenial—never—never! an unattractive, ignorant, red-headed, speckled-faced dowdy—*dowdy*—**DOWDY!**"

Her voice would rise almost to a shriek over those last words, and then die away in a moan of pain, while the poor child would roll her head upon her pillow and attempt to tear out her hated hair by the handfuls.

There were long days and nights of dreadful suspense, when the physician said a breath would decide her fate; twice he said there was no hope, but each time Gertrude's strong constitution—the result of the very romping and outdoor life that Allan had con-



demned—brought her safely through the critical period; and after six weeks spent on the very verge of the valley of death, she began slowly to convalesce.

She seemed more like a spirit than a human being as she came back to life—she was so wan, and white, and so frail that they almost feared to touch her lest she should vanish from their sight.

Her heavy, abundant hair had been first cut; then, as the disease advanced, her head was entirely shaven; and she made a forlorn picture indeed, as she lay upon her pillows, too weak to move even a finger, but following the movements of those about her with great, hollow eyes.

Her mind was very weak when she began to mend, and she did not seem to remember the past, or to realize her present condition. But gradually, after a week or two, Mrs. Livingstone could see, by the look of pain in her eyes and the grieved curves about her mouth, that memory was asserting itself again. She had not once spoken Allan's name since consciousness began to return, and that, too, was an indication of increasing strength of mind, because it showed that she had placed a restraint upon herself.

Several letters had come to her from Allan, but Mrs. Livingstone hardly knew how to broach the subject or give them to her. She dreaded, yet longed, to have her speak of the past and take up the threads of life again where she had dropped them.

But, even as she grew steadily better and was able to be lifted from her bed to a reclining chair, she remained silent, only speaking when some one addressed her directly, but sitting all day long looking from the window in a listless, indifferent way and appearing to take no interest in anything.

One morning Mrs. Livingstone came bustling into her room, her hands full of letters and papers, deter-

mined to break the ice. She held them up before Gertrude, saying, with playful reproach:

"Have you no curiosity, dear? I have a number of foreign letters here. Allan has written you several times—once before he knew you were ill and three times since you began to get better. Do you feel strong enough to read them? The doctor said I might give them to you to-day."

A burning flush suffused the girl's white face, then quickly receded, while a look of keenest pain shot into her great blue-gray eyes.

"Yes," she returned, after a moment's hesitation. "I will read them now."

She held out her hand for them, and Mrs. Livingstone was startled to see how it shook from weakness and nervous excitement.

Gertrude opened her epistles according to their dates. The first one had been written on board the steamer, and was in the form of a diary, giving her a detailed account of the voyage. It was very much like the style of his college days, beginning "My Dear Gertrude," and ending "Your affectionate Allan."

The others contained many expressions of regret on account of her illness, with hopes that she would soon be able to resume her customary pleasures; and there was now and then a kinder expression than usual, while he related several little incidents which he thought might amuse her; but they were far from being loving epistles, such as one would naturally expect from an absent, young, and loving husband.

She returned them carefully to their envelopes in the order in which they had come after she had finished reading them, but she made no comment, and betrayed no pleasure at having received them.

Mrs. Livingstone was keenly disappointed. But she began to talk about her own letters, telling her some things about Allan's studies and surroundings which he

had not mentioned to her. She finally asked if she thought she would feel able to write just a few lines to send him in a letter that she was going to dispatch that afternoon. Gertrude shrank as from a blow at this request, and Mrs. Livingstone was almost sorry that she had made it. But the next moment she looked up with a resolute expression, and said:

"Yes, if you will bring my writing pad, I think I can do a little at a time. I must write Allan a long letter."

So all day long she sat at the window, writing a little, resting a little, and then writing a few lines more, and thinking, thinking a great deal, until her letter was completed. And this was the pathetic epistle that went out over the water a few days later to Allan Livingstone in Paris:

"DEAR ALLAN: I am able to write to you to-day for the first time. My head is not yet strong, so what I write must be brief and to the point. I know you thought it was very strange that I should go away by myself during those last few hours that you spent at home. I saw in your face that you were displeased about it; but I had to go, and now I am going to tell you why.

"About four o'clock I went to sit in the hammock that hangs outside the library—I was waiting for you to come to me—and I heard the conversation that passed between you and your father. Of course, I do not know what all of it meant—about the threat; but it must have been dreadful to have you do what he wished. I know now just how you feel about it, and I would rather have died than have you bind yourself to me when it was so repulsive to you. I am only sorry that I did not die while I was so ill, so that you could be free again. I suppose it is a wrong feeling, but I have it all the same. I do not think, Allan, you had any right to marry me simply to help your father out of a

business trouble, and I am sure he had no right to ask you to do such a dreadful thing. I should think he would have preferred to lose every dollar in the world—to become a beggar even—rather than to ruin the happiness of his son, or impose upon any unsuspecting girl who was intrusted to his care.

“I am sorry, Allan—that was what I meant when I said I was ‘sorry for everything.’ If some one could only have told me how it was! I do not care anything about the money; Mr. Livingstone is welcome to what he needs; but he would have been more welcome if I could have given it to him without such a sacrifice on your part. Oh, it is cruel!—is there no way out of it, Allan? People get divorced. Cannot I do something so that you can be free? I will do anything—anything in the world for you, and I never would have gone a single step with you into that church—I shall always hate the place as long as I live—if I had dreamed you did not love me. I want you to answer this right away, for I shall be wretched until I hear from you, and do not forget that I am willing to do anything to give you back your freedom.”

GERTRUDE.”

She inclosed it in an envelope, sealed, and directed it—she had no notion of allowing it to go inside Mrs. Livingstone’s letter—and when, later in the afternoon, that lady came to get what she supposed would be a brief note, she was surprised to find a regular letter ready to post.

Gertrude was nearly prostrate again the next day from the pain and excitement of writing her letter. The second day, however, the invalid seemed better than she had been at any time, and asked for something to do to pass away the long hours.

Mrs. Livingstone gladly brought her a casket of bright-colored wools and a crochet hook, telling her to do what she pleased with them. She at once com-

menced to make a pretty tidy from a pattern and directions which she found in a book of fashions, and was really becoming quite interested in it when she suddenly dropped both work and hook and began to examine her hands.

"What is the matter, dear? Have you wounded yourself with your hook?" asked Mrs. Livingstone, observing her act.

"No; but—how white—how delicate they are!" Gertrude returned in a surprised tone.

"Of course; you have been ill a long time."

"I know; but there isn't a—freckle on them, and they were covered before."

"Oh!" ejaculated Mrs. Livingstone, looking enlightened, but surprised that she had not observed the fact before.

Gertrude glanced up quickly, and opened her lips as if she was about to say something; then she checked herself. Mrs. Livingstone instantly divined what was passing in her mind.

"Haven't you looked at yourself since you began to get better?" she asked.

"No; I—I didn't care to," was the plaintive reply.

Mrs. Livingstone arose, and, going to the dressing case, brought a hand glass and held it up before her.

"Well, then, look now, and tell me if you do not think our invalid is improving," she said, smiling.

Gertrude leaned forward to obey. A fair, delicate face, as white as the soft wool shawl about her shoulders, looked back at her.

The skin was smooth and fine, and without spot or blemish—every unsightly, hated freckle had disappeared! The cheeks were thin, to be sure, and the eyes seemed too large for the small face, but they were very beautiful, with that eager, surprised look in their rich depths. There was the faintest tinge of red in the lips, which were very sweet in expression, and between



them two rows of small, white, even teeth could be seen.

As already mentioned, her head had been shorn of all its hair during her illness, and the sight of its baldness had so distressed Mrs. Livingstone that, as soon as she was able to bear it, she had fashioned a pretty lace cap, which, fitting close around her forehead, was really very becoming with its dainty blue satin bow on one side.

An expression of astonishment crept over Gertrude's face.

"How queer! It does not look like me at all," she said.

Mrs. Livingstone laughed merrily.

"She is quite a fair, dainty-looking lady, isn't she?" she asked.

"Won't they come back?—the freckles, I mean."

"The doctor thinks not. There has been such a complete change in your system during this illness, he says your complexion will be very much improved; and—I imagine I have another surprise for you."

The lady lifted the pretty cap from her head, and, behold! standing up straight all over it, like a great brush, for it was not yet half an inch long, there was a thick new growth of hair, of a rich, beautiful brown hue.

"Why!" exclaimed Gertrude, catching her breath, and putting up both hands, as if to assure herself that it belonged there. "How came it so?"

"A person's hair often changes in color after a severe illness. It is very apt to do so if the head is shaven, as yours has been," explained Mrs. Livingstone.

"Will it always—*stay* so?"

The question was eagerly put.

"Yes; or it will grow darker if it changes at all."

"It is very strange! I—I really do not know my-

self!" said the girl, with grave, wondering eyes, while a delicate blush, as she realized that the sweet, refined face, with its nut-brown crown, was indeed her own, stole into her cheeks, so brightening her whole countenance that Mrs. Livingstone was thrilled with a sudden consciousness that her daughter-in-law was destined to become a very beautiful woman when health should fully return to her.

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## CHAPTER VII.

"I SHALL GO TO HILTON."

A few days later Mrs. Livingstone entered Gertrude's room, just after breakfast, and found her busily engaged in looking over a pile of books. A nearer inspection showed her that they were her despised and long-neglected school books.

She made no comment upon her occupation, but watched her attentively during the day. Two hours of careful study were spent upon her arithmetic; then an hour upon geography; history and language following, the same amount of time being devoted to each. Nothing was allowed to interfere with her work. Everybody was astonished, for such methodical habits were entirely at variance with her former ways.

Another noticeable change was her excessive neatness. She had become scrupulously nice regarding her personal appearance. Her dress, though simple, was now always carefully arranged; no rent was allowed to go unrepaired; she never now wore her collar awry; her cuffs were never rumpled or soiled, or her hair left to take care of itself.

As every week brought her strength and vigor, her cheeks became rounder and were tinged with a lovely pink; her hair grew longer, and curled lovingly in

glossy brown rings about her white forehead, and her eyes, too, seemed to have grown darker, and to glow with an animation and intelligence that was very attractive.

"Gertrude Livingstone is growing to be a regular beauty," was the oft-repeated comment of people who were in the habit of visiting The Elms, and it was not an ungratifying one, either, at least to Mr. Livingstone and his wife. But Gertrude shrank from company. It was in vain that Mrs. Livingstone urged her to go out visiting with her; she would not, and if any one called and addressed her as "Mrs. Livingstone," she would wince with pain, a burning blush suffuse her whole face, and she would vanish the moment she could do so without a breach of politeness.

The answer to her letter came one day, about four weeks after she had written to Allan. It was very kind, for he had been deeply moved upon receiving that pathetic appeal from the girl who was willing to sacrifice everything—yes, everything—for his sake; while it had shown him that there was more depth to her nature than he had imagined.

He answered it immediately, as she had requested, and he told her the whole truth, although he endeavored to cast as little blame as possible upon his father.

"Forgive me, if you can," he said. "I have suffered as much for the wrong done you as upon my own account. I have always loved you very dearly, in a brotherly way, and I told you no falsehood when I said that I loved you better than any one whom I had ever seen, and I meant that you should never know but that it was a love worthy of the devotion which you bestowed upon me. I can never forgive myself for what you overheard, however. I was wild with passion that afternoon—almost insanely angry that my father should ask me to give up my studies and

remain at home for his sake, after requiring that terrible sacrifice from us both. I never meant what I said, it was beneath any gentleman to speak of you in the way I did, and I repented bitterly the moment the words were uttered. Again I ask you to forgive me for wounding you so deeply.

"And now, dear, do not ever mention that dreadful word 'divorce' again. It would be impossible; and even if it could be arranged I never could consent to it; for your sake as well as mine I should oppose any such measure, for no scandal must ever touch you, Getrude, or our proud name. Do not forget that you are a Livingstone, now, although, now that you know how you have been deceived, I cannot blame you for feeling that the bonds which bind you to me are hateful fetters. But, my dear little friend, I will endeavor to make your life as pleasant as may be when I return; meantime, live just as happily as you can; forget, if possible, that you are bound; and make the most of the three or four years that are to be all your own, for you are to be just as free as if you had never spoken those words that made you my wife. I will lay no restriction upon you, save that you do nothing to cause any gossip or scandal regarding our union."

There was much more in the same strain, with some hints as to what she could do to make life pleasant, and a suggestion that study, if she could once become really interested in it, would do more for her than anything else.

Gertrude read the letter many times, and though she could plainly see that Allan still regretted their marriage upon his own account as well as upon hers, yet she was at heart relieved that he did not countenance anything like separation. There was comfort, even though it was accompanied by a bitter sting, in knowing that she belonged to him, and she had resolved that, although she might never be able to win his love, she

would at least win his respect. She would fit herself for the position which, as his wife, she expected to occupy; he never should be ashamed of her because of her ignorance.

For the first time a sense of joy, almost of exultation, took possession of her, that Allan would never again be annoyed by her personal appearance, for she knew that she was becoming very lovely.

One day, after her health had become fully established, she surprised Mrs. Livingstone by saying abruptly:

"I have finished reviewing my school books, and now I think I will go away somewhere to take a collegiate course."

"My dear!" exclaimed the elder lady, looking up with a start and flush, "that would be a very strange proceeding."

"How so?"

"Why—why, Gertrude, you are a married woman, and whoever heard of a person going to school after marriage?"

"Yes, I know I am married," the girl replied in a low, pained voice, her fair face dyed deepest crimson; "but I am not half educated yet. I have wasted a great deal of time, and I must make up for it in some way. Mrs. Livingstone, I shall go to Hilton College."

There was an awkward silence for some time after this resolute assertion.

Mrs. Livingstone did not know what to say in reply to it. She did not favor the school project for several reasons, but she saw that Gertrude's mind was made up, and she did not really feel that she had any right to oppose her. She resolved to say nothing more at present, but to write and consult Allan about the plan.

The stillness, however, was growing oppressive, and she at last looked up and asked in a gentle voice:

"Gertrude, why do you always call me 'Mrs. Living-



stone' now? Why not, my daughter, give me the endearing name—mother?"

A vivid blush rushed over Gertrude's face, and tears of pain sprang to her eyes at this unexpected question.

She had never called Mrs. Livingstone "mother" but once, and that had been upon her wedding day.

"Because I do not feel that I have the right," she returned in a constrained tone.

"But you have; you are my son's wife, and, truly, my child, I love you as if you were my own daughter."

Those words, "my son's wife," aroused all Gertrude's sense of wrong. She forgot everything, for the moment, but the wretched deception that had been practiced upon her, and the selfishness that had made her its victim.

"Yes, I know I am your son's wife," she burst forth impetuously, "a wife that was forced upon him to his aversion—his disgust. I am your daughter in name, but I am occupying a false position notwithstanding. Oh, it was wicked—cruel; cruel to both Allan and me. It is an injury that I will never forgive as long as I live; for nothing could justify it; and if there was anything that I could do to break the unnatural relationship, I would not hesitate a moment. I hate the very sight of the church where that mockery was performed; I cannot endure it to live in this house; I cannot bear to meet Mr. Livingstone or have him speak to me; I grow wild if I allow myself to think; I can only exist by working with all my might—by keeping every moment employed. This is why I want to go away to school, and I shall go to Hilton at the beginning of the second term of the year—the first of February."

She had spoken passionately, and with a ring of pain, almost of despair, in her voice, and every word was like a knife to Mrs. Livingstone's loving heart.

She arose and crossed the room to her side, laying her hand tenderly upon her shoulder.

The girl was trembling like a reed.

"Gertrude, do you feel like that toward me? Do you wish to go away because you hate me as you seem to hate my husband? Do you feel that we are all your enemies?" she asked sorrowfully.

For a moment the poor little wife hesitated, then she threw her arms around the stately, beautiful woman, laid her head against her breast, and burst into a tempest of tears.

"No, no—I love you—I love you dearly; but, oh! I cannot call you 'mother,' because it would imply that I had the full right to the place I occupy only by compulsion. The word would choke me every time I uttered it, because it would recall all the wretched past. Oh, why was there no other way for Mr. Livingstone to get money? I hate my fortune—I wish I had been a beggar—a charity child—anything rather than to have brought such misery into Allan's life."

"And into your own, too, poor child," murmured Mrs. Livingstone, with trembling lips, growing almost heartsick herself over the girl's suffering and sense of wrong.

"Don't you see I must go away?" Gertrude continued. "I am not happy here, while, too, I have begun to realize how much I need to study and educate myself. I have been making preparations for this purpose, and I know that I am ready to be examined and to begin a collegiate course. I shall be half a year behind, to be sure, if I enter in February, but I think I can make that up by working diligently. There are a few weeks yet, and I will study under private masters during that time. You will not oppose it," she pleaded, lifting her flushed, tearful face appealingly. "I can see that it would seem a little strange for any one who is married to go to school. But no one there need know anything about it. I can enter as simple 'Gertrude Livingstone'—all my letters can be addressed that way,

and I know I should not be quite so miserable as I am here. Forgive me, but everything here reminds me of that dreadful day."

"No, I will not oppose it, dear—it shall be as you desire," Mrs. Livingstone replied, looking very pained and grave. "I believe, on the whole, it will be the best thing you can do; it will, at all events, be a change, and I know you will be happier surrounded by young people of your own age."

So it was settled, and Mrs. Livingstone at once set about preparing her wardrobe, taking great pains to have everything as simple and girlish as she could, in order to make her forget her position and feel, if possible, like a regular schoolgirl.

Meantime Gertrude studied hard to make up for the half year she had lost. She engaged a private teacher, and dug deep into algebra, Cæsar, ancient history, and the other branches laid down in the catalogue which she had obtained from "Hilton," and when the first of February arrived she was surprised and gratified over the progress she had made.

Mrs. Livingstone accompanied her to the college, where she introduced her as "my daughter Gertrude;" her name was entered upon the register as Gertrude Livingstone, and no one there suspected anything of the sad romance connected with her young life.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### GERTRUDE AT SCHOOL.

"Have you seen the new scholar?"

"No, is there a new scholar at this time in the year?"

"Yes, she came this morning."

"What does she look like?"

"Oh, she is tall and slender, and I imagine she has been sick, for she looks delicate, and her hair is short, though it curls in just the loveliest rings all over her head and about her forehead. She has beautiful grey eyes, with the longest lashes I ever saw; there is the prettiest color in her cheeks, and her lips are like that bit of coral at your throat."

"Well, this is rather an attractive picture. What is her name?"

"Livingstone—Gertrude Livingstone. It has a kind of high-toned sound; hasn't it? I was passing the reception room just as she came, and I peeped while she was being introduced."

"Miss Curiosity! How old is she?"

"Ahem! It appears that I am not the *only* curious one. Well, I guess she must be sixteen, though her short hair makes her look very young. She is very quiet in her manner and carries herself—well, rather upheaded."

"Humph!—proud!"

"I don't know; we'll have to wait and see. There is something about her eyes, though, that goes to your heart, as if she'd seen trouble of some kind, you know. Hush, there she comes now."

The above conversation was carried on between a couple of girls who were standing near one of the windows in the main hall of the seminary building at Hilton on the day of Gertrude's arrival.

Considerable excitement prevailed among the pupils, as was always the case when a new scholar entered the school, and everybody was on the alert for anything regarding her personal appearance, her antecedents, and history in general.

Lu Perry and Rose Taylor were the young ladies who had just been discussing the new arrival, but they suddenly suspended their conversation as the wife of the principal, accompanied by Mrs. Livingstone and

Gertrude, came down the stairs into the hall where they were standing.

Mrs. Livingstone had seen Gertrude nicely settled in her room. She put her arms around her as she reached the door and kissed her tenderly, enjoining her to write every week, and be sure to take good care of her health.

It was not easy to stand there and watch the carriage drive away with the only friend between whom and herself there was a bond of perfect love and sympathy, and she would have returned to her room very wretched indeed if Mrs. Bennett, the principal's wife, had not linked her arm within hers, saying cheerfully:

"Come, dear, I must introduce you to some of your future companions," and, leading her down the hall, she presented her to the very girls who had been so earnestly discussing her advent a few moments previous.

Gertrude at once conceived a great liking for Rose Taylor, who was a very attractive girl of medium height, a brilliant, black-eyed brunette, with red cheeks, coral lips, and dazzling white teeth; a graceful, breezy, dashing girl—a veritable rose! happy, sweet-tempered, with a smile for everybody; tender, sympathetic, helpful. Of course, she was a favorite with both teachers and scholars, who called her "the sunbeam of the house."

"Come with me and let me show you about the building," she said to Gertrude half an hour after their introduction, and, winding her arm familiarly about her waist, she led her away to exhibit to her the attractions of the institution; taking her into the library, chapel, music, and various recitation rooms, and finally ending by drawing her into her own room, where she treated her to some of the contents of a delightful box which had arrived from home that very day.

From that hour the two girls were firm friends,



and Gertrude began to live a new and charming life in this intimacy, which was destined to last as long as she lived, and in the atmosphere of fresh young life that was all about her, and when, at the end of a fortnight, Rose's roommate was obliged to go home on account of illness, and Gertrude, who was occupying an apartment by herself, was allowed to take her place, her happiness seemed complete.

She had acquitted herself most creditably in her examination, and, although still considerably behind the first class of the college course, she was allowed to enter it and make the trial of going on with it.

Her teachers were very kind. It was simply a pleasure to teach her, she was so eager for knowledge—so determined to master every difficulty that stood in her way; and they were no less proud than Gertrude herself, when, as the end of the year drew nigh, she stood among the first in her class.

She had developed, too, a great taste for painting, while her voice, under careful cultivation, gave promise of becoming a source of delight to herself and her friends.

She heard from Allan regularly once a month, and she replied to every letter faithfully, although her own epistles were always very brief, and she said just as little as possible about herself and her pursuits.

Allan had approved most heartily her plan of going away to school, and was deeply interested in her progress, although he had to depend more on accounts from his mother regarding that than upon Gertrude.

"Who writes to you in such a fine, bold hand, and from a foreign port, too, Gertrude?" Rose asked her one day, as she came into their room, bringing a letter that the professor had just handed her.

"Oh, this is from Allan," Gertrude returned, seizing it eagerly, but coloring vividly at her friend's question.

"Allan, indeed! And who may 'Allan' be, if you please?"

"Why, Allan Livingstone, of course."

"Oh, your brother!" returned Rose, jumping at conclusions. "What is he doing in Paris?"

"Studying to be a physician."

"How old is he?"

"Twenty-one."

"Well, I must say you are extremely quiet about your affairs!" exclaimed Rose in surprise. "No one would have dreamed that you had a brother from anything that you had ever said. Pray, have you a picture of this noble youth?"

"Yes, there is one in my trunk," Gertrude admitted, but feeling greatly embarrassed.

"Do let me see it. I am crazy to know what he is like. Does he look like you?"

"Not at all; *he* is very handsome," Gertrude said, unconsciously emphasizing the pronoun.

"Indeed! Do you mean to imply that he is the only handsome one in the family?" demanded Rose dryly, but with a roguish twinkle in her eye. "What do you call yourself?"

"I am a—'dowdy,' " came from Gertrude's lips, almost before she knew what she was saying.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Rose, in astonishment, and speaking with indignant emphasis.

Gertrude laughed.

"Oh, some one called me that once, and I have never forgotten it," she explained, but with heightened color.

"I should like to know what reason any one had to insult you in that way?" said Rose, with spirit.

"More reason than you imagine possible," replied Gertrude gravely. "Less than a year ago I looked entirely different from what I do now. My hair was red, coarse, frowsy; my face was one mass of unsightly freckles; I measured and weighed half as much again

as I do now; and all this, besides being very careless and untidy in my personal appearance, contributed to make me anything but attractive."

"Your hair red!" gasped Rose, almost breathless from amazement. "Whoever would believe it? What changed the color?"

"I had a terrible illness—brain fever—and my hair had to be shaved off, and when it came out again it was no longer red."

"No, it is a beautiful glossy brown; and, Gertrude, there isn't the suspicion of a freckle about you. Your skin is as smooth and fair as a piece of satin; you have a beautiful color, and your eyes are simply glorious; you are just as lovely as you can be, and growing more so every day; you're the queen of the class. A 'dowdy'! Gracious! I'd like to box the ears of whoever said it!"

"Spare me," Gertrude said, putting her white, delicate hands up to her cheeks, and laughing at her friend's compliments and undisguised disgust over what she had told her. "I know I am changed, but I am afraid you have exaggerated the improvement."

"I haven't. But I suppose you want to read your letter from that precious brother of yours; so I'll vanish, until you are through, then I shall insist upon your showing me his picture."

She did not forget, as Gertrude hoped she would, but made her dive to the depths of her trunk, and bring up a photograph of Allan that he had sent her the last year he was in college.

Rose was delighted with it.

"He is like a young prince!" she cried. "You bad girl! Why have you concealed all this beauty in the bottom of your trunk? He isn't a bit like you, though. I guess he must resemble his mother, and you your father. We'll just put this treasure in the most con-

spicuous place we can find, and it will be such fun to see the girls open their eyes and wonder who he is."

"No, Rose, don't," Gertrude pleaded, with a troubled look, as the gay girl was proceeding to place the picture upon a bracket just beneath their looking-glass; "because girls always look in the glass the first thing when they enter a room, and they'll be sure to see it here," she said.

Gertrude could not tolerate anything like deception, so she would not say that Allan was her brother, and she could not tell her miserable secret, and acknowledge him as her husband.

"I would like to know why you are so obstinate about it," retorted Rose. "I declare I feel personally aggrieved that you should have kept this fascinating face concealed from me all this time. Have you been afraid that some of us would fall in love with him, and you have other plans for him? Perhaps he is even spoken for already, and you thought some of our innocent young hearts might be endangered to no purpose. Come, be a dear, now, and let me put the picture where I want to. I'll make the girls think that he is a very particular friend of mine."

But Gertrude would not; it was too painful a subject to be talked about, and she would not run the risk of having to answer uncomfortable questions.

Rose saw that something was troubling her—something that she did not wish to explain—so she returned it to her after a time, and said nothing more about it, though she could not help wondering how any one having so handsome a brother as Allan Livingstone appeared to be could refrain from talking about him and betraying a pride in him.

As the long summer vacation drew near, Gertrude began to dread going back to Livingstone Elms. She had been so happy at school. But she did not have to go back. Permission came to Rose from her mother

to invite her friend and chum to spend the vacation with her at Long Branch, where the Taylors had a lovely residence, and Mrs. Livingstone, upon being consulted, agreeing to the arrangement, Gertrude was only too happy to accept it.

So the middle of July found the two friends by the sea.

Mrs. Livingstone went up to Long Branch also. She had been very loath to give up Gertrude for the whole vacation, but remembering what she had once said about her dislike for Livingstone Elms, and her aversion to her husband, she had not the heart to oppose her request to be allowed to visit Rose.

She felt, however, that she could not be denied her society altogether, and so she resolved that she would herself spend the summer at the same place.

She had seen her but once or twice since she left home, but she realized from her letters that a great change had taken place in her.

Her accounts of her life at school were very entertaining and well written, both as to penmanship and syntax. They were very cheerful also, while occasionally she would indulge in little pleasantries that were exceedingly gratifying to Mrs. Livingstone's sympathetic heart, for they told her she was happier than she had been.

Then at Easter Mrs. Livingstone had received an exquisite little picture, painted by the young girl's deft fingers, and which had displayed a rare gift, as well as great care and nicety in execution.

"My daughter will yet be an accomplished woman!" was the gratified woman's comment upon receiving this token of remembrance. "We shall be very proud of her by and by. Allan will never have reason to say again that she is ignorant and uncultured, while as for her personal appearance she was growing very lovely the last time I saw her, and I foresee that when he re-



turns he will be very likely to fall in love with his own wife. I must really make her sit for some pictures and send him one."

When she met Gertrude at Long Branch she found her in perfect health, and greatly improved in every way. She seemed happy, yet at times that old wistful, pathetic look would return to her eyes, sending a keen pain through Mrs. Livingstone's heart, and convincing her that the old sorrow was not forgotten.

She brought a whole trunk full of pretty things for her to wear at the seaside, and it was a perfect delight to her to see how charming she was in them, while Gertrude herself betrayed pleasure in her wardrobe.

It was not because she was growing vain of her good looks, but it was such a comfort to know that she was no longer ugly, and that no one could criticise her unkindly.

She never forgot that summer, for it was one of pure, unalloyed pleasure.

Rose had her pony carriage and they drove everywhere together. Mr. Taylor had his yacht and they made such delightful excursions during the long hot days. Mrs. Livingstone was close by in the West End Hotel, where Gertrude could see her at all hours, and where, too, they often went to lions and receptions. Then she had her letters from Allan and she was becoming conscious of a pleasant change in them.

He no longer wrote in a superior, half-patronizing, sort of elder brother style. It was as if he had begun to recognize a difference in her and addressed her as an equal.

He was making a tour of the Alps and Switzerland that summer, and had a great many entertaining things to write about; and one thing in particular struck her—his letters to her were very much longer than they had ever been, while those to his mother were proportionally shorter. Still, there was never a

tender passage in them; not a single word to show that she was anything more to him than she had been in the old days of their childhood.

But all halcyon days must have an end, and so this beautiful vacation time passed all too quickly. September drew on apace and with it the time for returning to school.

They all went up to New York about a week previous in order to make a few last purchases for the girls before they went back to Hilton, and then it was that Mrs. Livingstone broached to Gertrude the subject of pictures.

"My dear," she said, "I hardly feel as if I could give you up again; this has been such a delightful summer, and I shall be very lonely when I go back to Livingstone Elms. I want you to sit for some photographs before you return to school—and we ought to send Allan one, too."

She saw at once, however, that she had made a mistake in adding that last clause, and she would have given much to have been able to recall it.

Gertrude colored a vivid crimson, straightened herself with a haughty air, and, after an awkward pause, replied:

"It is too warm to sit for pictures now, besides we have so many other things to do; I will wait until some other time—there will be opportunities enough."

She spoke with such decision that Mrs. Livingstone knew it would be useless to urge the matter; but she was greatly disappointed.

When Gertrude was alone again she went up to her glass and examined her face critically.

A smile, half pleased, half bitter, wreathed her scarlet lips as she looked.

"He would never know me—if I should send him a picture he would hardly believe it was taken for me. But—he shall never have one—I will never throw my-

self at him. He has a picture of the 'dowdy' as she was at fifteen; let him have the full benefit of it, and then when he comes home he can see the change for himself."

\* \* \* \* \*

The next two years at school were but a repetition, mainly, of the first one.

Gertrude did not relax her diligence, and every report forwarded to Mrs. Livingstone showed that she was doing strong, good work; while certain pictures that were, from time to time, expressed to her were a perfect delight to her and gave evidence of artistic talent of a high order.

Gertrude experienced some anxiety during this third year of her course. Allan had not been quite well of late, and there was some talk of his coming home.

If he should return, there would be an end of school for her, for her place, as his wife, would be with him in his home, and she could not then complete her course and receive her diploma, which she was exceedingly anxious to do.

For a month this uncertainty had caused Gertrude great anxiety—she was growing exceedingly nervous, and was losing flesh and color on account of it.

One afternoon she and Rose wandered away to a cozy green nook not far from the seminary, and where they often went on a warm day with their books to study.

"I declare, I cannot realize that in less than a week my school days will be over and I shall leave Hilton for good. I believe I am very sorry to go," said Rose, as she slipped her arms about Gertrude's waist and leaned her head against her shoulder.

"And what am I to do without you if I come back next year?" Gertrude asked, with a sigh and unsteady voice.

"If you come back! Of course you are coming.

Gertrude," said her friend, looking surprised at the doubt her words implied.

"I am not quite sure."

"Well, what is the reason, then?"

"I am afraid Allan is coming home."

"Afraid that your brother is coming home!" cried Rose, in astonishment. "Why, I should imagine you would be perfectly delighted; I cannot understand, either, why his return should interfere with your course. He ought to be the last one to prevent your graduating when he is so learned himself."

Gertrude made no reply to these remarks, but sat with drooping eyes and flushed cheeks, nervously twisting her wedding ring round and round upon her finger.

"Do stop twirling that ring, Gertrude, and tell me what you mean," said Rose, a trifle impatiently. "That is a great habit of yours when anything troubles you. By the way," she interposed, as if some strange thought had suddenly occurred to her, "I have often wondered what makes you wear that ring and no other, when you have such lovely ones in your jewel box. It looks like a wedding ring. Are there any particular associations connected with it?"

"Yes, it is a wedding ring, Rose."

Gertrude had made up her mind some time previous to tell her friend the story of her life before Rose left school. She had kept it a profound secret all this time; but now they were about to part—Rose would be sure to learn it some time, and she preferred to relate it herself. This seemed a fitting time, and her friend's question gave her the desired opportunity.

"Whose?" inquired the young girl. "Some relative's, I suppose; perhaps it belonged to some one who has died—your mother, maybe—and you have taken a vow to wear it, and no other, all your life. It would be like you."

"Yes; I have taken a vow to wear it all my life,"

said Gertrude very gravely, but regarding the heavy circlet sadly. "But—it belonged to no friend, Rose—it is my own wedding ring!"

"What!" exclaimed the girl, starting up and regarding her companion as if she thought she had suddenly gone crazy.

"It is true, my dear," the young wife answered, smiling slightly at her friend's amazement, but with the old pained look returning to her eyes. "The fourth of September will be the third anniversary of my wedding day."

"Gertrude Livingstone, you have fairly taken my breath away. Married—to whom?" cried Rose, with the blankest of faces imaginable.

"Allan Livingstone."

"O—h, and he isn't your brother at all?"

"I never said he was. You assumed that, and I let you remain under that impression because I could not explain the mistake without exposing my secret."

"What was your name before?"

"Gertrude Wynn. I am going to tell you all about it; but of course you will understand that I want it to remain a secret still. I would not have it known in the school for anything before I graduate, if I do. If Allan comes home, however, it will have to be known, because I shall be obliged to take my place as his wife."

"Obliged! Do you not love him?" Rose asked.

Gertrude blushed a vivid crimson, and hid her burning face in her hands.

"That is the worst of it—I love him with all my heart," she confessed, with passionate earnestness.

"Then, how can you dread his coming?"

"Oh, Rose! can't you understand? It is because he does not love me."

Rose Taylor turned and regarded her friend with astonishment.

"Not love you! Why, how could he help loving



you? Why on earth did he marry you, then?" she asked.

And Gertrude told her all the story of her life.

Rose looked serious. "Do not borrow trouble, dear," she said, after a moment; "hope for the best; I believe it will come out right. It nearly breaks my heart to see you look so unhappy, so brush away the clouds and be my own Gertrude again. I thank you for giving me your confidence—I have somehow felt as if there was some mystery connected with your life, but I never liked to speak of it. Now there is one favor that I want to ask of you before school closes—grant it and I shall be happy."

Gertrude turned questioning eyes upon her friend.

"Well, what is it, my Rose?"

"I want you to go to Brainard's and sit for some pictures, so that I can have one to take home with me."

Gertrude smiled a trifle bitterly and shrugged her graceful shoulders.

"You ask a great deal; but—I will upon one condition."

"Name it, my dear friend. I can refuse you nothing."

"That you will allow no one here to know that you have it; I have never sat for a picture since I was fifteen——"

"What! Have you never sent Allan one since you have changed so?" interrupted Rose eagerly.

"No. Mrs. Livingstone has begged me again and again to have some taken, so that she could send him one; but I would not. I know that I have been very obstinate about it—I have said to myself that he should not have one on any account—it would seem too much like trying to court his favor, and I shall be the last person to invite his attention to my changed looks."

The girls soon after returned to the school building, and the next day Gertrude went to Bainard's to sit for

some photographs. When they were sent to her a few days later they were very lifelike and charming.

The young girl's eyes lighted with pleasure at the first glance, and she almost wished that Allan could have one of them. Then her proud little head was lifted with a haughty air; a resolute look settled upon her mouth.

He should not—she thought—he should never know anything of the change in her until the moment when they should stand face to face upon his return.

She went to her trunk, and brought forth the picture that she had taken when she was fifteen—Allan had one exactly like it—and compared it with those she had received that day.

A low, scornful laugh broke from her red lips as she looked. No wonder he had called her “a dowdy.”

She felt for the moment as if she must tear it in pieces, while from the bottom of her heart she pitied the poor, homely, forlorn-looking child as if she had been some one else; she pitied Allan, too, for having had her forced upon him as a wife.

Could it be possible that those pictures had been taken from one and the same person? It did not seem so, for they were so utterly unlike.

“What is it? What were you laughing at?” Rose asked, looking up from the book she was reading.

“Come here and see,” Gertrude responded quietly.

Rose obeyed, and her friend handed her one of the recent pictures.

“Oh, they are perfect,” cried the delighted girl; “and what a lovely position the artist has given you. I hope you told him to destroy the negative, else he will be having one put in the showcase; then, what will all my vows of secrecy amount to?”

“You may be sure I attended to that,” replied Gertrude, with a flush. “They are very good I think; but—how do you like this?”

As she spoke she laid the old-time picture above the new one.

"Mercy! what a little fright! Who is it?" cried the unsuspecting girl, elevating her pretty nose disdainfully.

Gertrude laughed merrily, still there was a ring of bitterness in it that smote painfully upon her friend's affectionate heart, while a second and more critical glance revealed something familiar about some of the features.

"It is a picture of 'that dowdy.'"

"Gertrude, what have I said? Do forgive me," exclaimed Rose, in dismay.

Gertrude stopped her with a kiss.

"There is no need; you only spoke the truth," she said gently. "You and I can see that there has been a marvelous change, and we are both glad that it is so. But the heart of that poor, plain little orphan girl was just as true and loyal as that which beats in the breast of Gertrude Livingstone to-day. She is older, and wiser, and—better looking, perhaps—but in soul and spirit she is unchanged."

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## CHAPTER IX.

### A SOLEMN SEAL.

School had closed for the year. Commencement was over, and Rose Taylor had graduated.

She was to go into the country and spend a few weeks with her parents; meantime Gertrude was to travel with Mrs. Livingstone, visiting Saratoga, Newport, and the White Mountains, after which the two girls were to spend two or three weeks together at Livingstone Elms.

Rose had a cousin, a young man named Frank

Winthrope, who was very fond of her, and who had come to Hilton to see her graduate. He had been captivated by Gertrude's loveliness the moment he saw her, and could scarcely keep his eyes off her during the exercises of the day.

"Who is that girl in blue nun's veiling trimmed with blue satin, and a string of pearls about her neck?" he had asked Rose, when, after she had received her diploma and the class had been dismissed, he went forward to congratulate her.

"That is my roommate, Gertrude Livingstone."

"By Jove! is it, though? She's the tidiest craft I've ever seen; sails like a swan, and without a bit of surplus rigging either."

Mr. Winthrope had just returned from a yachting trip, and was very profuse with his nautical expressions.

"'Jove' is not one of our deities, Mr. Frank, and you will not speak of my friend as if she was simply a sailing vessel," retorted Rose, with some show of spirit.

"I beg your pardon, my fair cousin, if I have given offense; but I assure you I meant it as a compliment to the young lady. If it will suit you any better, however, I will say she is a beauty—a regular 'out-and-outer.'"

"She is just as good as she is pretty, too, and her accomplishments are the pride of the school; you should hear her sing! and I must not forget to show you her paintings," Rose returned enthusiastically.

"Introduce me, will you?"

"Yes; only let me warn you beforehand, she is no flirt."

"Ah!"

Mr. Winthrope's intonation was somewhat incredulous, implying that he had seen but few pretty girls with whom he could not flirt if he wished.

"It is true," asserted Rose. "It won't do for you to play your usual role of 'knight slain by the power of beauty'—you must talk no nonsense, mark you, or you will be snubbed worse than you ever were before."

"I shouldn't wonder," he responded, with a critical glance at Gertrude; "she looks as if she might be capable of looking a fellow out of countenance if he was too free; however, I think I will risk an introduction."

Rose performed the ceremony as soon as she could find the opportunity, and for an hour after, Mr. Frank Winthrop exerted himself, far more than was his custom, to make himself agreeable.

"He is very handsome and very nice every way," she said to herself, when thinking it over afterward, "but—he is not like Allan."

Nevertheless it was very delightful to have Mr. Winthrop meet them at the station the next day, take all the responsibility of baggage and tickets; find them nice seats on the shady side of the car, see that they had everything for their comfort, not forgetting a pretty box of the most tempting confections that could be found in Hilton, and perform numerous little attentions for them all the way to New York.

Here the girls were to part, and there was no mistaking the fact that Mr. Winthrop felt almost as much regret as they over the circumstance; though he brightened visibly when Gertrude thanked him for his kindness, and "hoped they might soon meet again."

Fond good-bys were exchanged between the two friends, and Rose and her cousin resumed their journey, while Gertrude was whirled away to the Brunswick House, where she was to meet Mrs. Livingstone.

They spent three weeks at the Grand Union at Saratoga, where Gertrude, with her princess-like beauty, attracted much attention and had many admirers; and after that came the trip to the White Mountains with



a choice party, and where they met Rose with her father and mother, and Mr. Frank Winthrop.

The young man constituted himself Gertrude's attendant upon every occasion, and was so devoted that Rose began to be seriously afraid that her hitherto unimpressible cousin was really in danger of losing his heart to her lovely friend.

But if such was the case, he had no opportunity to declare it, for Gertrude, by some subtle influence, kept him at a distance, never allowing their intercourse to pass the bounds of a pleasant friendship; and though, had she given the slightest encouragement, she might have had many suitors, no word of love was spoken to her during all these weeks of travel and pleasure and mingling with the gay world.

Rose returned to Livingstone Elms with her at the beginning of August, and the girls spent four happy weeks together, which were a pleasant memory all their lives.

"I wonder if I shall ever enjoy another summer as I have enjoyed this," Gertrude said musingly, as they sat together in the hammock that still hung outside the very window where she had overheard Allan's criticisms of her, on the last night of Rose's stay at The Elms.

"It has been like a poem—an idyl. Oh, Rose, it is lovely to be young and——"

"And beautiful," interrupted Rose playfully.

"Yes, I suppose it is; but I was not going to say that, I was going to add 'full of health, hope, and vigor,' if——"

"If what?"

"If one could only look forward with pleasure to the future. I wonder where we will both be a year from now," she concluded thoughtfully.

"I shall probably be in Europe," said Rose. "We are to sail the fifth of October, to be gone—I don't

know how long. And you are really going back to school?"

"Yes, we heard from Allan last week, and his health is so much improved that he has decided to remain another year."

"And that will give you the opportunity to graduate. I suppose you are glad of that?"

"Very; and I am going to work very hard this year, my Rose," Gertrude returned.

The morrow saw Rose on her way home, and two or three days later Gertrude went back to school. But we cannot follow her all through the year. Suffice it to say that she did work hard, and came out at the end wearing the honors that she had hoped and labored for.

No one demurred when she was appointed valedictorian; and when, on commencement day, she stood up before the large audience that filled the commodious chapel, clad in her simple yet elegant graduating dress, without a single ornament save a bunch of old-fashioned white roses fastened in her belt to relieve its simplicity, she looked like a virgin queen.

She was an erect, slender, white figure, with a lovely, flower-like face, a little proud, perhaps, but very, very beautiful with its soft bloom and wonderful blue-gray eyes, while the graceful, thrilling sentences that flowed like musical running water from her scarlet lips swayed her listeners by their magnetic influence. It was a triumph of which Mrs. Livingstone was exceedingly proud.

Then, too, a little later, when the guests poured forth and she heard her praises upon all lips—when they went to the art room, where, hanging upon the walls and resting upon one or two easels, were pictures of great merit, and they exclaimed that this "beautiful Miss Livingstone must be a wonderful young lady, so talented and cultured," her cheeks flushed and her lips

quivered with love and delight. Nor was this all; her cup was not yet full. In the evening there was a grand *soirée*—a reception given to the graduating class and their friends, and Gertrude was invited to sing.

With stately grace that was all her own, and perfect self-possession—for she knew her power—she walked to the piano, and, while one of her schoolmates played her prelude, lifted her eyes and calmly surveyed her audience. They were rather indifferent, for not much could be expected in the way of a voice of a girl not yet out of her teens, they thought.

Her voice all at once rose above the murmur of others, clear and sweet as that of a woodland thrush, swelling forth with a power that no one supposed possible to that slight form. The company suddenly became breathless, and tears started unbidden to many eyes at a singular pathos that thrilled through those entrancing tones and touched every heart.

The song ended, she would have disappeared, but a round of rousing applause signified that her audience was determined to hear her again. With a flush on her rounded cheek, she paused and glanced hesitatingly about her.

The principal, approaching her, observed, with a smile of satisfaction:

“If you are not too weary from the exercises of the day, Miss Livingstone, pray gratify them.”

She turned back then and sang a bright, tripping little air, full of spirit and infectious glee, after which, with a slight smile and a decided little bow, she glided out of the door behind her, and going around to the main entrance of the drawing-room, sought Mrs. Livingstone’s side.

“Gertrude, my dear, I never dreamed you could sing like that,” whispered that lady, clasping her daughter’s hand, while the flush of pleasure deepened on her

cheek. "My child, how you must have worked this year!"

"Yes, I have; but it has been pleasant work," Gertrude answered, with an inward pang at the thought that her school days were over.

"I am glad, dear; but I do wish Allan could have seen and heard you to-day," said Mrs. Livingstone, with a regretful sigh.

Gertrude's eyes shone and the color on her cheeks deepened, while a crimson little smile wreathed her lips, but she made no answer to the wish.

In six weeks Allan will see her, she thinks, for he is coming home, and after the hot weather is over he is going to establish himself as a practicing physician in New York. She wonders how they will meet.

The thought has been troubling the fair young wife ever since the letter came announcing Allan's contemplated return.

It continues to trouble her after the family go down to a quiet, pretty place on the coast of New Jersey, not far from Long Branch, where they had taken a lovely residence for the summer, there to wait for him.

One day, only a week before Allan was expected, there came a letter from him to his mother, one that had been delayed some weeks.

It was full of anticipation and joy at the thought of returning, and in it he spoke of Gertrude in a way he had never done before, and that sent a thrill of delight through his mother's heart.

"How will she receive me, do you think?" he asked. "Does she still hate the tie that binds us, and wish that it could be severed? These thoughts have troubled me of late more than I can tell you. I am going to confess that I have been growing very proud and fond of my little wife during the last two years. She has been a charming correspondent, though I should have been better pleased if she was not quite so reticent and

self-contained. I am getting very impatient to meet her face to face, and see for myself the change you have mentioned. I am, my dear mother, longing to get home to you all, and yet, somehow, I dread to meet Gertrude—I dread to claim her as my wife. I am sometimes afraid she will never forgive the wrong done her four years ago.”

If Gertrude could have seen this whole letter, the years that followed might have been very different ones. If she could have known that it breathed of feelings that might almost be called love—the love that she had craved all her life, prayed for, mourned for—she might have known very much less of sorrow.

Mrs. Livingstone read it through twice, then re-folded it, and lay back in her chair, with it clasped in her hands to muse upon it, a happy smile upon her lips, a new joy in her heart, and thus musing, she fell asleep.

An hour later Gertrude came up to seek her.

“Are you ready for our drive?” she asked, putting her bright face in at the door.

There was no reply. The still figure in the rocker by the window did not move.

“How strange for her to sleep at this hour,” Gertrude murmured, with a look of surprise.

Then, feeling that she ought to have been aroused by the sound of her voice, she went forward to her side, a terrible feeling of fear and dread oppressing her.

She laid her hand upon her shoulder. Still she did not move, but lay with that beautiful smile upon her lips, as if she was dreaming pleasant dreams.

“Dear Mrs. Livingstone, it is time for our drive,” said Gertrude; but her voice sounded strange, almost unearthly, in that solemn stillness.

And yet there was no answer, no movement.



The girl bent and looked more closely into her face; then an agonized cry broke from her blanching lips.

"Mother!" she cried; "oh, speak to me!"

But the loved and loving term was spoken too late, and the dear voice would never answer to it, for the death angel had set his seal upon those smiling lips, had laid his cold hand upon the fond heart, and stilled its pulsations forever.

Allan Livingstone's mother was dead.

Gertrude stood like one paralyzed for a moment or two, as the terrible truth forced itself upon her. Then she put forth a shaking hand, and rang a bell with a startling peal.

A servant answered it almost immediately, and found the young girl on her knees before that still figure, moaning with grief, and wildly chafing the white, beautiful hands, in which Allan's letter was still grasped, and which were fast growing cold and rigid in death.

"Go call Mr. Livingstone instantly, and send for a doctor," Gertrude commanded, turning her convulsed face and agonized eyes upon the maid, who, at once comprehending the dread truth, sped quickly upon her errand.

The whole household was aroused and soon on the spot, gathering about the dead with affrighted looks and bated breath.

Mr. Livingstone was nearly distracted by the sudden affliction, for he had almost worshiped his fair, stately wife, for whom he would have sacrificed anything in life; for whom, indeed, he had sacrificed his own self-respect and the happiness of his only son.

The physician came, but said the lady had "long been past help, but her death had been painless, caused by thrombosis of the heart. She had gone to sleep, evidently with pleasing thoughts, judging from that lovely smile on her lips, and had thus passed into the

great beyond, where nothing unpleasant or harmful could ever touch her again."

Mr. Livingstone was rendered utterly helpless, and for a time no one seemed to know what to do.

Gertrude finally saw the need of arousing herself, and telegraphed for Mrs. Livingstone's only sister, a maiden lady, who lived in New York City.

She came immediately, but was nearly prostrated herself by the heavy blow; while upon her and Gertrude fell the whole burden of planning for the last sad honors that were to be paid to their beloved dead.

It was finally arranged to embalm the body, and then await Allan's return for the burial.

Poor Allan! coming, even then, with so much of hope and joy in his heart, and all unsuspecting of the sorrowful tidings awaiting him.

But Gertrude was even more to be pitied, for she had an added blow to bear.

When the physician had pronounced her kind friend dead, and ordered the body to be laid away, she had gently removed Allan's letter from her hands, and carried it to her writing desk.

While doing so, her eyes caught sight of those last two lines that he had written about her, and which, of all others, were the very ones she ought to not have seen:

"I am, my dear mother, longing to get home to you all, and yet I dread to meet Gertrude—dread to claim her as my wife."

She might have read the whole letter had she chosen, but her high sense of honor forbade her doing so. She had not meant to read even that much; but the letter was folded in such a way that those words were uppermost and her glance had followed them before she realized that they were never intended for her reading, and a pain, keener than any she had yet suffered, shot like a red-hot arrow through her heart.

Allan dreaded to meet her—dreaded to claim her as his wife; he still regarded her as such with aversion; his bondage was still hateful to him, as it ever had been, were the thoughts that naturally followed the perusal of those sentences.

It was too, too hard. He would return only to find the dearest object of his home snatched from it—only to drag out a miserable existence with her, whom he would recognize and tolerate as his wife simply to save his proud name from scandal.

There were times during the next few days when, prostrate upon her face, in her room, doing battle with her rebellious heart, it seemed as if she could not live and bear it.

“Oh, mother, mother!” she would moan, thinking of her now only as such, and giving utterance to the name she had refused to her while living, “he loved you; he could have enjoyed you; why could not I have been taken in your place? I, whom no one would have missed, whose presence, even, is destined to be a blot in the home where I shall reign only upon suffrance.”

Those were very wretched, solemn days to them all, while they awaited in that darkened home for the coming of the absent son.

Five long, weary days had passed since the spirit of her who had always been its chief charm and centre went out from it forever. On the morning of the sixth the papers announced that the steamer *Europa* had arrived.

An hour later there came the following telegram, addressed to Mrs. Livingstone:

“DEAR MOTHER: Arrived this morning. Expect me at six p. m. ALLAN.”

The family were at breakfast when it came. Mr. Livingstone opened it, glanced at the brief message,

groaned, and, passing it to Gertrude, abruptly left the room.

The young wife grew white to her lips as she read it. It was a relief to know that he was safe in port; but the ordeal before her seemed almost more than she could bear; besides, who was to tell him that his mother was gone? Would that trial fall to her lot, too?"

It would be impossible to describe the varied emotions that tortured her during the seemingly endless hours of that day.

The silence that brooded over the house, the gloom that haunted and darkened every room, was almost maddening, while the dreadful strain of the last week upon her nerves was telling severely upon her.

Miss Frothingham, Mrs. Livingstone's sister, pitied the wretched girl from the bottom of her heart, and tried to think of some way to comfort her.

"My dear," she said to her about noon, "don't you think it would be better if we should make the house a little more cheerful—open the blinds and let in the sunshine? It will be sad enough at best for Allan to come and miss the light of his mother's presence; so let us have one room at least inviting and homelike. Would you mind asking the gardener to cut some flowers? And will you arrange them in the blue parlor? Or, what would be better yet, go and cut them yourself; you have not been out since I came, and you need the air.

"There is something else, too, that I wished to ask you about," Miss Frothingham had said, after a little while, when Gertrude had become more tranquil. "You will excuse me, my child, if I appear to interfere with what does not concern me, but I feel so sorry for Allan that I am anxious to lighten his grief as much as may be. What will you wear to meet your husband?"

"Oh, Miss Frothingham," Gertrude cried, with a

startled flush at the sound of that last word, and just ready to break down again, "I cannot think of dress at such a time as this!"

"I do not know why not, dear, if it will contribute to Allan's comfort. You would not think of seeing him as you are now, in your mourning robe—you must exchange it for something. Remember, he has not seen you since your wedding day, and to greet his bride in sombre black would strike a double chill to his heart. Wear something white—let it be as simple as you choose. I know it will be pleasant for him to see you in it."

A sting of bitterness shot through Gertrude's heart at this suggestion.

Allan dreaded to meet her, anyway. Then, what could it matter to him what she wore? White or black, it would be all the same, for he would have no thought of any one but his mother. What if he had not seen her since her wedding day? She had not been such a pleasant sight to him then, even in white, nor had the occasion been so joyous a one that he should wish to be reminded of either it or her in connection with this new affliction.

She did not reply to Miss Frothingham, but sat musing sadly on these things until she suddenly remembered something that Mrs. Livingstone had said to her on this same subject only two or three weeks ago.

"Gertrude," she had observed, "you must wear nothing but white on the day of Allan's return. I want him to see you at your best, so wear your graduating dress; you were lovely in that."

Yes, for the sake of the dear friend whom she had always loved so well, she would do as she had wished, and comply with Miss Frothingham's request also.

She could not wear the graduating dress, though, for it was far too elaborate for such a sad home-com-



ing; but she had an albatross cloth that was more simply made, and she knew that she should feel better herself in it than in any of those heavy funeral robes that had come from New York only the day before, even though she believed that she had nothing to hope for in Allan's return.

Her heart felt lighter upon making this resolve, and after awhile she took a basket and went out to gather some flowers for the blue parlor, as Mrs. Frothingham had asked her to do.

The fresh air did her much good, the breeze from the sea revived her, and brought back a tinge of pink to her cheeks, which had grown very wan during the five or six days that she had shut herself away in the house.

She looked with longing eyes down toward the water and the boat landing, while her own little boat was dancing temptingly up and down upon the sunlit waves.

She had not been out for a row for nearly a week, and she yearned for a long pull at the oars, for she loved the amusement now just as well as she had when a child.

But she turned away from the temptation with a regretful sigh, gathered her flowers, and, carrying them within, spent an hour or more arranging them, and was really cheered to see how homelike and inviting the pretty room looked when all was done.

Then she went upstairs and laid out the simple white dress that she was to wear that evening, sewing some soft ruchings into the neck and sleeves, and fashioning a cluster of white satin ribbons for her waist.

But she could not do much. She was too heartsick to give much thought to her personal adornment. Everything that she touched reminded her of the dear one again, and her work was interrupted again and again by uncontrollable bursts of grief.

She grew restless and nervous after a while. It was not yet four o'clock, and two long hours more must pass before Allan would arrive. What could she do with herself all that time? Her gaze wandered out through the window again to the water, and the sunlight, glancing with the waves, seemed to beckon her forth like the hand of an old friend.

"If I might go for a little while," she murmured wistfully.

"Why not?" she added more resolutely, after a moment. "I believe I shall go mad if I stay here alone for two hours longer. I will go."

She started up, hurriedly donned her boating suit of dark-blue cloth, tied a broad brim hat upon her head, drew on her gloves, and passed softly out of her room.

She went to Miss Frothingham's door and tapped for admittance.

"I am very nervous and feverish, Miss Frothingham, and I am going out on the water for a little while," she said, putting her head inside the room, but speaking in an appealing tone, as if she half feared that lady might not approve her project.

"That is right," she said, assenting heartily; "it is just what you need. My dear," she added, seeing the cloud still upon the young girl's brow, "I believe we should always be sensible. There are some customs that are all right under certain circumstances, but we never should submit to them to the injury of health; so do not fear that you are doing anything out of the way in going out, only be sure you are back in season to meet Allan."

"I will be back in time," Gertrude answered, as she noiselessly closed the door and went away.

Slowly the stately, graceful figure passed downstairs, out into the beautiful grounds, down the graveled walk that led directly to the water, where she unfastened her boat, a dainty affair, painted white

and gold, with crimson-cushioned seats, its prow finished with the head of a swan, entered it, and, taking up her oars, was soon flying far out over the blue waters.

At half-past five Miss Frothingham went downstairs to see that everything was in proper order for Allan's reception.

"Has Miss Gertrude come in?" she asked of a servant, whom she met in the hall.

The girl replied that she did not know that Mrs. Livingstone had gone out.

Miss Frothingham retraced her steps upstairs and peeped into the young girl's room.

It was empty, but in perfect order, while the pretty white dress lay upon the bed all ready to be put on.

A tear started to the good woman's eye to see how she had heeded her suggestion in spite of her own reluctance to do so; but she was greatly disturbed not to find her there.

"She may be in the bathroom," she thought; and, going to it, she tapped upon the door, saying at the same time: "Gertrude, are you there?"

There was no answer, and she opened the door. There was no one within.

She flew below again, her heart laden with anxious fears, and questioned every servant in the house. Not one had known of her going out or coming in.

The gardener was called, and he alone had seen Gertrude on her way down to the water. He was dispatched to the boathouse to ascertain if she had returned.

He came back, saying that her boat was not in its place, consequently she must be out still.

Miss Frothingham, with a pale face and trembling limbs, traversed three flights of stairs to the observatory, where, with a powerful glass, she swept the whole bay below.

There was no boat upon it, save away in the distance she could distinguish a sail or two gleaming like white wings in the sunlight.

She was almost distracted by this time, and knew not which way to turn.

She could not consult Mr. Livingstone, for he had gone with the carriage to the station for Allan, to whom he was to break the sad news of his mother's death on the way home. She, however, ordered the gardener to take another man and Mr. Lancaster's boat and go in search of the missing girl, and then she sank wearily into a chair to wait, with what composure she could, for coming events.

The clock struck six, but the carriage had not yet come in sight, and she prayed that it might be delayed—she cared not how long so that Gertrude could be found, for it would be dreadful if she were not there to meet her husband when he should arrive after four years' absence.

She now blamed herself for having sanctioned her going out upon the water; but she had not thought of danger—the day had been bright and quiet, and she knew she was accustomed to go rowing by herself.

But she noticed now for the first time that the wind had changed and was blowing directly out to sea. Oh, she ought not to have let her go, she should have proposed a drive, a walk, anything to have kept her from danger, upon this night of all others.

Hark! That was the sound of wheels and the tread of horses' hoofs upon the graveled avenue. Yes, they have come, and, with a sinking heart, she went out upon the veranda to meet them and welcome the wanderer home. Her courage almost failed her, for she knew how Allan must have yearned to see his mother standing there to greet him and the grief it would cause him to see another in her place.

The carriage drew up before the door just as she

passed out, and she could not restrain her tears as the nearly heartbroken son came up the steps, took her for a moment into his arms, and touched her forehead with his quivering lips, but could not utter a word of salutation.

"My dear, dear boy," she said, clinging to him, "it is a sad return for you; but, God bless you! I am glad to have you back."

She led him into the pretty room that Gertrude had decked with flowers for his coming, and began to ask him about his health and his voyage, striving to occupy the time and his attention so that Gertrude's absence would not be noticed, while she listened with painful intentness to catch the first sound of her footsteps when she should come.

Allan had improved greatly—he had grown manly, more mature, and was a handsome, distinguished-looking gentleman. But he was pale now, and his face was almost convulsed with the grief that he was trying in vain to master.

He had noticed instantly that Gertrude was absent, but he knew, of course, that she, too, must be suffering greatly, perhaps she was even ill and unable to leave her room; still he was disappointed not to see her, for during the entire voyage he had been trying to picture to himself what she would be like, and wondering how she would greet him.

A servant came to the door and announced that dinner was waiting.

Miss Frothingham quaked inwardly; then Allan turned to her and asked:

"Where is Gertrude, Aunt Marcia?"

"I am very sorry—I do not understand it—I am very anxious—but Gertrude is not here," she stammered confusedly and looking deeply distressed.

"Not here! Surely you do not mean that she is away from home?" Allan said, astonished.



"No; but she went out about four o'clock and has not yet returned, although she promised to be back in time to meet you."

"Where did she go?" Allan inquired, with compressed lips.

"Rowing upon the bay."

"What! At such a time as this—my mother lying dead in the house!" he said sternly, for he was terribly wounded and annoyed by such a strange proceeding.

"Do not blame her," Miss Frothingham said gently. "I advised her to go, for she has shut herself up and nearly grieved to death ever since your mother died. But she grew so nervous and feverish to-day that I advised her to go out. I feared she would be ill."

Allan made no reply, but he looked moody and very unhappy.

He could not help thinking it a singular coincidence, for had she not gone rowing upon the very afternoon of his departure to conceal the misery she had experienced regarding their enforced union? Perhaps the present nervousness and feverishness, of which Miss Frothingham spoke, might have been caused by the same feeling—from an inward chafing against those very bonds which she now felt tightening about her. He recalled, with singular bitterness, the fact that during all their correspondence she had not traced one single expression of affection for him, one regret at his absence or desire for his return; and now this evident avoidance of him at the moment of his coming cut him more keenly than he would have been willing any one should know.

Miss Frothingham led the way to the dining room, with a very heavy, anxious heart, and not one of them had any desire for food, although the dinner was served with a punctilious regard to its usual forms.

Dessert had just been brought in, when a servant entered, looking flurried and disturbed.

The men had returned, she said, from their search for young Mrs. Livingstone; they brought no tidings of her, but they had found a slender oar floating upon the waters, which they were very sure belonged to her boat, the *White Swan*.

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## CHAPTER X.

### A DOUBLE AFFLICTION.

The greatest consternation prevailed in the Livingstone household upon receiving this startling intelligence.

Miss Frothingham fainted, and was borne to her room to be cared for by the servants, while Mr. Livingstone and Allan—the latter now filled with remorse for the bitter and unkind thoughts that had occupied his mind regarding Gertrude's absence—bestirred themselves to institute in the morning a thorough search for the missing girl.

In the interim, Allan stole softly up to Gertrude's room, feeling as if there would be some comfort in seeing about him the things that belonged to her and that she had handled and looked upon from day to day.

The first object that caught his eyes, as he opened the door, was that dainty white robe, with its fresh, delicate ruches and graceful cluster of satin ribbons, that she had laid out upon her bed ready to put on to receive him in. There lay her handkerchief, too, faintly perfumed with rose, a pair of silken hose, and little kid slippers, with black velvet rosettes, while on her table there was a tiny vase of beautiful sprays of heliotrope, his own favorite flower.

A thrill of delight, that was yet keenest agony, pervaded his heart as he noted these things, for they were significant to him.

She had not meant to run away from him, after

all; these preparations had been made for his coming, and showed care and thought for him, even in the midst of her own grief for his mother and her dearest friend. She had intended to be there to receive him, and had hoped, perhaps, to make his return a little less sad by wearing white in place of the sombre black, which was customary in a house of mourning.

He was deeply touched and very remorseful for his previous bitterness against her.

He fell upon his knees beside the bed, and, with his face buried in the folds of that soft white robe, gave vent, for the first time, to all the sorrow that had been pent up within his heart, sorrow for the idolized mother who was lying so near him in that silent, pulseless sleep of death, whose hand would never again clasp his, whose lips would never again bless him or speak his name; sorrow, too, for the fair young wife whom he had hastened to meet with so much of mingled hope and fear.

He prayed that she might be guarded out on the trackless ocean, that she might be kept from a tragic end and spared to him, and he would try to shield and preserve her from every future ill.

Strong man though he was, his grief and suspense nearly exhausted him; but with the first sign of breaking day, he went below to make arrangements for the sad work before him, and at an early hour three steam tugs were plowing the waters of the bay in different directions in search of Gertrude.

All day long those energetic little vessels ranged the sea and returned at night, each hoping for favorable tidings from the others.

But alas! there was nothing to tell, except of weary hours of suspense and fruitless search, and Allan went home looking ten years older than when he had arrived the evening before, so full of life, and hope, and joy.

Another night of agony was passed, then another

day of search, and so on for three weary, never-to-be-forgotten days, and then all hope was blotted from every heart by the return of one of the tugs, which brought with it Gertrude's boat—the dainty *White Swan*, its pretty cushioned seats all soaked and discolored with sea water, her hat, and handkerchief, and one of her gloves lying at the bottom.

One oar had been found in the rowlock, and the theory of the steam tug's captain was, that, having lost the other, she had tried to recover it and had lost her balance, fallen overboard, and been drowned.

It was a terrible affliction, doubly so coming so soon after Mrs. Livingstone's death, and the whole family were paralyzed by it.

The burial of that lady could no longer be delayed, and she was borne back to Livingstone Elms and laid in the family vault by her heartbroken husband and son, who felt as if life could never again hold anything of hope or joy for them.

The excitement and grief proved to be too much for Miss Frothingham, who was stricken with fever, and a long illness followed.

When at length she began to get better, however, she longed to do something to comfort Allan; for his wan, white face, heavy eyes, and listless manner told that he was suffering very keenly.

She talked much with him of his mother, telling him of her many hopes and plans regarding his return. She had spent several weeks with her sister during the early part of the summer, and many circumstances had transpired during her visit which she knew would interest him.

Then she told him of Gertrude, of her life at school, of her brilliant examination, and the sensation she had created when she graduated.

"You can have no idea how lovely she was, Allan," she said, after describing how she had appeared that

day. "She had changed wonderfully during the four years of your absence; you never would have known her. Her face had grown more delicate and refined, her complexion a clear pink and white, while, you know, she always had beautiful eyes."

"Is there no picture of her anywhere?" Allan asked, with a terrible sense of longing and desolation.

"No; your mother told me she could never persuade her to have any taken—though why, I'm sure I cannot understand. It is a great pity, though, for now you can never know how she looked. She was so talented, too; you can see that in her paintings, which are all over the house; and, oh! if you could have heard her sing! She would have drawn your heart right out of your keeping."

"I believe she had done that long before I came home, by some nameless charm and influence that pervaded all her letters," Allan replied, with a deep sigh.

"How were your own letters? Were they what they should have been under such circumstances?" asked Miss Frothingham, regarding him sadly.

"I am afraid not," he said in a regretful tone. "I am sensitive—I am proud. Gertrude once told my mother that our marriage was an injury that she would never forgive, and so I have never allowed myself to express anything of the change that has been going on in my heart, although I have been conscious for some time that I was going to love her."

"Oh, you ought to have told her of it."

"Perhaps so; but, knowing that she had overheard all those cruel things that I said on the day of my departure, I feared she might regard me as insincere and feel, perhaps, that I was trying merely to reconcile her to the inevitable. I tried to comfort myself with the thought that I might win her by degrees, as any lover would win the girl whom he loved, upon my return."



"Oh, she was already won. She has loved you faithfully, Allan, from the first. It was this very affection that inspired her to educate herself and improve every talent that she possessed, in order to be fitted for the position which she would occupy as your wife."

Miss Frothingham continued very delicate after getting up from her illness—so much so, indeed, that the family physician said that unless she had a change of climate he feared she might go into a decline.

So when the physician prescribed change of climate for Miss Frothingham, the inmates of Livingstone Elms concluded that it would be beneficial for all of them to go away for a time, and it was finally arranged that they should make a trip to Southern California, spend a couple of months there, after which they would go to Florida, and perhaps return by the first of May to their home upon the banks of the Hudson once more.

In accordance with this arrangement, the beautiful mansion was closed, and the grief-stricken trio set out upon their journey, to see what travel and change would do toward mitigating their sorrow and restoring health and vigor to their bodies.

Miss Frothingham was still so frail and weak that Allan feared that she might not be able to endure the fatigue of traveling. But the excitement and change seemed to do her good from the moment of starting.

Reaching Chicago, they rested for a few days.

It was a bright, beautiful day, late in September, when our party took their seats in the handsome Pullman car that was to be their rolling home for the next week.

It lacked only a few moments of the time for starting, when the affable and handsome porter of the car bustled in, his hands full of bags, baskets, and packages, and followed by a strikingly beautiful young

lady, who was attired in a plain but stylish traveling costume, a modest, dark hat, relieved by a single knot of blue velvet, perched in the most becoming manner upon her golden head, while her every movement bespoke the cultured, high-bred lady.

She was conducted to the section directly opposite that occupied by our own travelers, who could not fail to be interested by her grace and beauty, by her quiet yet intelligent directions to the porter regarding the disposal of her belongings and the few pertinent questions she asked regarding the route, accommodations, etc.

Evidently she was accustomed to travel, and knew how to make the most of every convenience, for her parcels and baskets were arranged in a way to cause very little trouble in getting at their contents. Presently the signal for starting was given, and the train rolled out of the station into the full light of day. Then Allan Livingstone noticed that she took in, with one slow, sweeping glance of a pair of wonderful blue eyes, every occupant of the car.

Her attention seemed to be specially attracted to the party from Livingstone Elms, for her look lingered a moment upon Allan's handsome face, passed his father by rather indifferently, then dwelt with a pitiful, sympathetic look upon Miss Frothingham's wan countenance and drooping form.

"Who can she be? How like a princess she carries herself!" was Allan's mental comment, as he covertly watched her and wondered if she was to be their traveling companion all the way to San Francisco.

He thought of her as "The Princess" after that until he discovered her name. She appeared to take no notice of him, however, after that one lingering glance; she seemed utterly indifferent to his presence, though he could see that those pansy eyes often wandered to his aunt's face with a wistful tenderness

which betrayed that she recognized her as an invalid and was sorry for her.

She had half a score of books in one of her dainty bags, and she kept herself employed with them almost wholly during the first day, and evidently did not care to make friends with any one.

The next day she was quiet as before—absorbed in her books.

But this tantalizing reserve was destined to be disturbed ere long.

The weather was very sultry for the season; the car was close, for people do not like cinders, and will not have the windows open, and all at once Miss Frothingham wilted, sinking, white, and still, and breathless before her companions.

"The salts—camphor, Allan!" Mr. Livingstone cried in startled voice; "they are in the leather bag."

Allan tried to find them, but, like everything else wanted in a hurry, they were not easily found. While he was turning over the contents of the leather bag in in a flurried manner, the graceful form opposite glided over to them, and a hand like that of the Capitoline Venus proffered a cut-glass vinaigrette with a golden stopper.

"The lady has fainted," said a musical voice, with a pitying accent; "use this—untie her bonnet, loosen her scarf, and get some water."

Mr. Livingstone seized the little bottle, and put it to his sister's nostrils, while Allan tried to remove her bonnet and scarf, in obedience to the directions of "The Princess."

But somehow he was clumsy. The bonnet would not come off. The strings had slipped into an intricate knot, and he only made matters worse by trying to untie them.

"Let me try," said the same musical voice, but with a little note of authority in it that made him instinc-

tively relinquish his position, when their beautiful traveling companion sank into the seat he had vacated and deftly removed both bonnet and scarf.

Meantime Mr. Livingstone had found the camphor and a bottle of eau de cologne.

"That is better than the camphor," said the self-constituted nurse, holding out her hand for the latter; and, saturating a clean handkerchief which she took from her own pocket, she bathed Miss Frothingham's face and head with the fragrant liquid, until she began to show signs of returning animation.

Allan was ready with a restorative, which he made her swallow as soon as she was able, and she soon came fully to herself.

"You are better," said the fair stranger gently, and smiling a beautiful smile. "Now I know you want a drink of water and this window raised a little to let the air in upon you. My mamma is subject to faintings turns, and I have helped her out of them so many times that I know just what to do."

Allan was off instantly with his silver mug for the water, while his father raised the window, and the young lady, unfurling a fan that lay beside her, kept a steady current of air flowing upon the invalid.

"You are very kind," said Miss Frothingham, a faint smile parting her pale lips, for it was a delight simply to gaze upon that lovely face and to note the tender look that had come into her beautiful eyes. "You are our young traveling companion opposite," she added, with a glance toward her empty section.

"Yes; my name is Blanch Van Ausdel," she answered, frankly introducing herself; "and I came to you because the gentleman could not untie your bonnet. You know ladies' fingers are much more deft in getting out knots," she concluded, smiling, and bestowing an arch glance upon Allan, who had turned with the water for his aunt. "Are you feeling quite com-

fortable now?" she continued, after Miss Frothingham had had her drink.

"Thanks, I am much better," that lady replied. "I have just recovered from a long illness, but am not strong yet. The heat is very oppressive, and I am somewhat wearied with the motion of the cars."

"I wonder if there isn't something else I can do for you?" Miss Van Ausdel said thoughtfully.

"Yes," returned the elder lady, as she looked into the bright face with a great longing, while she thought of that other beautiful girl, whom, in imagination, she always seemed to see lying, cold and still, at the bottom of the ocean; "you can do something for me, if you will sit there and talk to me for a little while; it does me good to see your young face and hear your fresh voice."

Miss Van Ausdel's pansy eyes flashed a bright look at the sweet invalid, and her bewildering smile revealed two rows of perfect, milk-white teeth at this request.

"That will be very agreeable, I am sure," she said.

But the slight flush that arose to her cheek and the shy look which she shot at Allan and his father reminded Miss Frothingham of a neglected duty, and that the young lady would not feel quite comfortable to sit there in utter ignorance of who her companions were.

"Forgive my thoughtlessness," she said. "I should have introduced my brother, Mr. Livingstone, and my nephew, Doctor Allan Livingstone."

Miss Van Ausdel acknowledged the introductions with easy grace, and laughed musically as Allan remarked, with a ceremonious wave of his hand:

"And my aunt, Miss Frothingham, must not be neglected in these formalities, Miss Van Ausdel; it is fitting that you should know upon whom your efficient attentions have been bestowed."



A familiar footing having been thus established between all parties, the young lady devoted herself to the task of entertaining the interesting invalid, which she did so acceptably that dinner was announced as served before they could realize how the hours had sped.

The porter came as usual for Miss Van Ausdel, but Allan begged to be allowed to take her out this time; and, as Miss Frothingham did not feel able to leave her section, he persuaded her to occupy his aunt's seat at their table; and as she sat opposite him, fully at ease, talking of the trip, the scenery, the easy mode of traveling nowadays, with so many conveniences and elegant appointments, there seemed to be a fascination, a charm about her, that he had never seen in any woman before.

He experienced a sense of pleasure and satisfaction when she told him that she was traveling through to San Francisco. She was going to visit friends, and would remain two months in the great city, after which she would return to Chicago, her native place, and where she and her mother had, during the six or eight weeks just past, been keeping house for a sister who was traveling in Europe.

The remainder of the journey was delightful. Miss Frothingham improved daily, and enjoyed the fine scenery exceedingly. Allan and Miss Van Ausdel became almost inseparable companions. They parted at Oakland, however, for Miss Van Ausdel's friends, the Farquars, met her there, but not until an exchange of visits had been promised, when they should be rested from the journey.

The Livingstones were to remain a fortnight or more in the great Western city, and so there would be an opportunity for meeting several times.

Three days after their arrival they received cards, bidding them to a reception at the Farquars', and given

by them in honor to Miss Van Ausdel and to introduce her to San Francisco society.

Miss Frothingham was not able to go, Mr. Livingstone had no heart for anything of the kind, and so Allan felt obliged to respond in person, although he, too, was far too sad to enjoy the thought of gay company.

The drawing-room into which Allan was ushered was a marvel of richness; in every nook and corner, it was, in the blaze of the wonderful chandeliers of crystal and gold, a room fit for a queen's reception.

Miss Van Ausdel was standing at one end of this enchanting place with her hostess, by whom she was presented to their guests as they arrived, while she looked, indeed and in truth, "a princess," in her trailing dress of heavy white silk, profusely trimmed with rich lace; diamonds on her white neck and arms, and a diamond star in the heavy coils of her burnished hair.

Her eyes flashed a dazzling glance at Allan as he came forward to greet her, and her scarlet lips parted in a bewildering smile of welcome.

"Ah, Doctor Livingstone, I do not need an introduction to you," she said, with eager cordiality, as she made a place for him beside her, "and it is so pleasant to see some one whom I have known before—everybody here is a total stranger to me."

She presented him to one or two others, but evidently had no intention of allowing him to pass on, as others had done, and so engaged him in conversation.

"I was half afraid you would not come," she remarked, "and I am sorry you are alone. How is dear Miss Frothingham after her tedious journey?"

"My aunt is very comfortable, but, of course, somewhat weary. She and my father desired me to express their regrets that they could not be present to-night," Allan responded, wondering if there was another woman living who was as beautiful as Miss Van Ausdel.

"Society must be her native element, I believe," he said to himself; and then some one at his side echoed his thoughts by remarking:

"What a wonderfully lovely woman 'Miss Van Ausdel is!'"

He turned and recognized a lady to whom he had been introduced.

"I think that must be the opinion of every one present, Miss Prescott," he said, smiling.

"I wonder if all Chicago ladies are beauties? I have met several, and they seem to be peculiarly gifted in that respect," continued the lady, who was rather plain herself, but very engaging in manner.

"I cannot enlighten you upon that point, never having passed more than a day or two in that city," said Allan smiling.

"I have never seen but one lady whom I considered as lovely as Miss Van Ausdel," resumed Miss Prescott meditatively. "She was a New York lady and a school-mate of mine, and by the way, Doctor Livingstone, her name was the same as yours. I wonder if she might not be a relative? Her name was Gertrude Livingstone."

Allan started, and grew pale.

"Yes, I had a relative by that name," he said, with unsteady lips.

"Had! She is not—you do not mean——" incoherently exclaimed his companion, looking alarmed.

"Yes; I do mean just what you fear, Miss Prescott. She was drowned about two months ago."

"Drowned!" repeated the young lady in an awe-stricken tone. "How dreadful!"

"Yes, it has been a great shock to us all," Allan responded, in a pained voice; and then he related some of the circumstances to Gertrude's former school-mate.

"It is very sad," she said as he concluded. "Was she your sister, Doctor Livingstone?"

"No," he said, with compressed lips; "but she was a very dear relative and had made her home with my family for many years—in fact, we grew up together."

"And you say this accident occurred on the very day of your return from abroad?"

"Yes; I had not seen her for four years."

"She must have changed very much during that time," observed Miss Prescott. "Indeed, she changed during the three years that I knew her. I must say she was one of the loveliest, most talented girls I ever saw. You should have heard her valedictory, Doctor Livingstone. It was conceded to be the most brilliant one ever delivered before the faculty, and everybody was charmed with her."

A wild longing came into Allan Livingstone's heart as he listened to these encomiums on his lost wife. Everywhere he went he heard her praises rehearsed.

Miss Prescott saw that the conversation pained him, and changed the subject, speaking of the attractions of her own city, of its importance, rapid growth, etc., until supper was announced, and Mrs. Farquar came to ask Allan to take Miss Van Ausdel out.

It was not long before the beautiful girl almost made him forget the pain which Miss Prescott's reminiscences had recalled, and he at last went home much lighter of heart than he would have believed possible an hour previous.

Miss Van Ausdel adroitly planned for several excursions, in which the Livingstones were included, and the next two weeks passed very quietly in the round of sight-seeing.

"I shall be so lonely when you are gone," Blanch said to Miss Frothingham on the day before they were to leave for the Yosemite, when she went to make her

farewell call upon her. Her glance wandered to Allan as she spoke.

"Lonely," said the lady in surprise, "when you are among such gay people here."

"I know that sounds strange," Blanch returned, coloring, "but meeting you as I did on the way, and then coming among so many strangers, made me feel almost as if you were old friends. I do hope we shall meet again sometime, dear Miss Frothingham."

"I hope so, too, my dear," returned her friend, regarding the beautiful girl wistfully, "for you make me think, once in a while, of a dear niece whom I have recently lost, although you do not resemble her."

"Ah!" exclaimed Blanch, with a sympathetic inflection.

Then, turning to Allan, she said in a low, reproachful tone:

"Doctor Livingstone, why have you never told me that you have recently lost a sister? I fear my levity must have sometimes seemed ill-timed and given you pain."

Allan opened his lips as if to reply, then, as if suddenly overcome by some sacred memory, he abruptly arose and left the room.

"Oh, Miss Frothingham! What have I said to hurt him, now?" the girl exclaimed in real distress.

"My dear," gently explained Miss Frothingham, "It was not a sister—it was Allan's wife whom we lost."

The startled girl sprang suddenly from her seat, and stood gazing wildly down upon the face of her companion.

"His wife!" she cried hoarsely. "Doctor Livingstone married! I never dreamed it."



## CHAPTER XI.

## BLANCH PLAYS A TRUMP.

For a moment Blanch stood there, gazing in blank astonishment at Miss Frothingham, her face very pale, a strange light in her wonderful eyes. A feeling of dismay took possession of her at having betrayed so much before Allan Livingstone's aunt. But her active mind was equal to the emergency, and she retreated from her uncomfortable position with a tact and grace that must have won the admiration of the prince of strategy himself.

She dropped upon her knees beside her companion, and, grasping her hands, said in a trembling, regretful voice:

"Oh, Miss Frothingham, why did you not tell me this before? How I must have pained him!—how I must have pained you all with my thoughtless gayety! I have laughed and jested with you as if I believed you had not a care or sorrow in the world. I have said many things I never should have said if I had known of this."

"My dear child," returned the guileless lady, pitying the beautiful girl's evident distress, "do not blame yourself so needlessly, for, truly, you have helped to make some otherwise dark hours pass very pleasantly. It was quite providential our meeting you on the way, and you have done us all good."

"It is very kind of you to say so," Blanch answered in an humble tone; but with averted eyes and flushed cheek, she continued: "Will you not tell me about your trouble, please?"

Miss Frothingham thought her very lovely and sym-

pathetic, and, complying with her request, told her something of Gertrude's history, of her early marriage to Allan, of his long residence abroad to study for his profession, of the death of his mother, and the sad tragedy connected with Gertrude, together with Allan's return to a house of mourning and desolation.

"It is all very sad," Blanch said gently, when Miss Frothingham concluded; "and you have dearly loved this young girl, whom you say was so beautiful. Have you a picture of her, dear Miss Frothingham? I should like to see it so much."

She was very anxious to know just how beautiful Gertrude Livingstone had been, and to compare her own charms with hers.

"No, dear; and that is one of our deepest regrets, for she had changed so much during Allan's absence that we wish he could know just how she looked. But my sister could never persuade her to sit for a picture; she would not have any taken."

"Would not?" repeated Miss Van Ausdel in surprise, and with a strange flash in her eyes.

"No; she had been rather plain as a child, and her likenesses then were very unsatisfactory, and she was extremely sensitive regarding them. She was still very young when Allan went away—only sixteen, and very immature; but she developed wonderfully during the four years of his absence, and I have thought she refused to have any pictures taken in order to keep this fact from him and give him a pleasant surprise upon his return."

Miss Frothingham began to feel that she had been led into saying too much, although she had tried to be guarded; but this beautiful girl seemed so sympathetic and interested she had won her confidence more fully than perhaps was best for a stranger. She resolved to say no more, however, and changed the sub-

ject, but what she had not told Miss Van Ausdel was sharp enough to surmise. She had been very strongly attracted toward the handsome young doctor. She had been in society for three years; she had been an acknowledged beauty and belle during that time, and had many admirers at her feet; but she had her ideal, and she had resolved she would never marry until she met the man who fully came up to it.

The moment she saw Allan Livingstone in the car at Chicago something within her had instantly and instinctively said, "Thou art the man," and every hour spent in his society since had only tended to develop that feeling.

It had been a terrible blow when she learned that he had been married, and, as we have seen, it nearly threw her off her balance. It had been her boast that she should stand first and foremost in the affections of the man to whom she gave herself, and now the only one who had ever had power to touch her heart had already won and lost a wife.

However, her distress was somewhat mitigated upon learning the circumstances connected with his marriage, and she had become too deeply interested in him to allow that fact to disturb her to any serious extent.

Allan returned to the room before her departure, and when she arose to go, offered to accompany her.

She was unusually reserved on her way home. There was a gentle gravity in her manner toward Allan that struck him as somewhat peculiar, while, at the same time, he was not sure but that she was even more charming thus than when giving vent to her exuberant spirits.

"Will you come in, Doctor Livingstone?" she asked, when they reached her friend's door.

"Thanks, I must not; we leave early in the morning, and I have two or three commissions from Aunt

Marcia, which must be attended to immediately, so I must take my leave of you here."

She gave him her faultlessly gloved hand, and lifted grave, regretful eyes to his face.

"I do not believe I need tell you that I am sorry to say good-by," she said, a suspicion of tremulousness in her sweet voice. "You and your friends made my journey hither so pleasant, and the two or three weeks that we have spent together here, also, that I regret to part with you. I hope we shall meet again sometime."

"I hope so, truly," Allan responded earnestly, and noticing the slight trembling of that small hand in his and the wistfulness in those velvet eyes.

"If," he added, "you should be at home when we return, I shall do myself the pleasure of calling upon you, as I intend to spend a week or more in Chicago."

"When shall you return?" Blanch asked, an eager flash leaping to her eyes.

"In a couple of months, I think."

"I shall be at home," she asserted, resolving that nothing should prevent her from being in Chicago when he came back, "and you will be sure not to forget me?"

"I will be very sure," he answered, with a smile and an earnestness that thrilled her.

"And, Doctor Livingstone—there is something that I want to say to you. If I have at any time pained you by my thoughtless levity, or by urging you into gay society that has jarred upon you, pray forgive me. I—did not know until to-day of—your recent loss."

Her cheeks were flushed, tears had sprung into her eyes, and she spoke in a gentle, deprecating tone that touched him deeply.

Involuntarily he clasped her hand more closely, for she was very charming in that softened mood.

"You have not given me pain, I assure you, Miss

Van Ausdel, although, of course, the loss of my mother, together with the tragic end of another who was so dear to us all, has been very hard to bear," Allan replied gravely; then, with a last brief farewell, he left her.

The Livingstones went on their way, visiting Southern California and the Yosemite, and Allan was not in the least danger of forgetting Miss Van Ausdel, for Miss Frothingham was constantly rehearsing her praises and regretting that they could not have had her pleasant companionship throughout their journey.

The trip proved to be a very enjoyable one, however, the lady gaining health and strength with every change, and when their two months were spent, Mr. Livingstone and his sister proceeded directly to Florida, where they were to spend the winter with Miss Frothingham's brother, while Allan, who wished to see more of the West, lingered by the way, visiting various places of note, and thus finally came back to Chicago.

He did not forget his promise to Miss Van Ausdel—indeed, he was anxious to resume her acquaintance—and almost his first act, after refreshing himself from his long journey, was to present himself at her home in Wabash Avenue.

She seemed even more charming than when he had left her in San Francisco, and she entertained delightfully.

She was in a luxurious home, surrounded by everything to make life enjoyable, while her delight at meeting him again was evident enough to have flattered a much more reserved and unappreciative man than Allan Livingstone.

He was introduced to Mrs. Van Ausdel, who also must have been a beauty in her day, for she was a remarkably lovely old lady, and carried herself with a



dignity and ease that proclaimed she had always moved in the best of society.

Blanch at once set herself about making Allan's stay in Chicago as pleasant as possible, and he found himself launched, almost before he was aware of it, into the midst of the most brilliant circles, where he was received with that charming cordiality for which the metropolis of the West is noted.

He found everything very attractive—the place, the people, the bustle and excitement that everywhere prevailed.

"I believe I should like to settle here," he said to himself one day: "and if I can find a favorable opening, I think I shall avail myself of it."

The opening was not long in presenting itself. He called upon Miss Van Ausdel one evening, and found her mother quite indisposed and consulting with the family physician, Doctor Fosdick—an elderly gentleman of venerable appearance and courtly manners.

His professional call was about over when Allan arrived, and, upon being introduced to the young man and learning that he also was a physician of the same school as himself, and that he had studied four years abroad, he appeared to become greatly interested in him, and the evening passed in delightful intercourse between the two, although Miss Blanch was not over-pleased to have her caller thus monopolized by another.

They met several times after that, and Allan could not help perceiving that he was becoming quite a favorite with the old gentleman, who, one day, remarked, in a jovial way:

"I wish, young man, I could chain you here in Chicago."

Allan looked up quickly.

Perhaps this was the very opening he was looking for.

Doctor Fosdick saw the look and the flash of earnestness in the young doctor's eye.

"How would you like to stay and share my practice?" he continued. "I am getting old; I can't go out in all kinds of weather as I used to, and my practice is much larger than I ought to attend to."

"Are you in earnest, sir?" Allan questioned gravely.

"Yes. Why not? If you are ready for business and my suggestion pleases you. I like your ideas—you are up with the times, you have had first-rate training, and if you practice as well as you preach, I may want to drop out of the harness altogether, or as much as my patients will allow, after a time."

"I had thought I should like to settle here," Allan admitted thoughtfully.

"Then do so," said the old doctor earnestly. "I like you—I believe you are an honorable, trustworthy man, and if you can secure the confidence of my patients, I shall be very glad, for I do not need the practice now—I have money enough and should be glad to take it easy for the remainder of my days."

Allan deliberated upon the matter for a few days, but that only resulted in his accepting Doctor Fosdick's offer, and thus he was installed, under the most favorable circumstances, as one of Chicago's M. D.'s.

Blanch Van Ausdel was jubilant upon learning Allan's decision to remain permanently in Chicago. She had been dreading his departure more than she was willing to own, even to herself.

But now he was to stay—his home would be there, and she would have plenty of time and opportunities to win him.

Would she succeed? She believed so. Everything seemed to be in her favor, and they met constantly in society; he was often her attendant at places of amusement, while as yet no one else appeared to have at-

tracted more than his passing attention, and she hoped much for the future.

And yet at the beginning of spring Blanch Van Ausdel was apparently no nearer the goal of her hopes than she had been when she and Allan Livingstone parted in San Francisco. He was still attentive, polite, friendly, but not one tender word had he ever breathed into her longing ears.

One evening during a call from him she had seemed strangely preoccupied and depressed. Allan had never seen her thus before, and, after trying in vain to draw her out, he arose to take his leave, thinking she might not be well and he would not intrude longer upon her.

"Oh, do not go," she said, looking up, startled by his sudden move. Then, with a deprecating smile, she added: "I know I am not entertaining—I am very stupid to-night, but there is reason for it, I assure you."

"I am afraid you are not well," Allan said, regarding her earnestly.

"Yes, I am well," she returned, flushing beneath his glance, "but—I have received a letter from my sister, Mrs. Overton, to-day, and she wishes me to join her abroad immediately."

"And would you not enjoy such a trip, Miss Van Ausdel?" Allan asked, with a smile.

"I hardly know," she answered, with averted eyes, and it was evident that her heart was beating with heavy throbs which she was trying in vain to subdue. "I have been so happy at home this winter that it would take a good deal to tempt me away."

He glanced at her sharply. Her words, her tone, her emotion impressed him strangely, and it came to him like a sudden shock that this beautiful woman might have been learning to love him—that she hesitated about going abroad because of that, and a word from him would change all her life.

Should he speak it?—did he love her?—did he wish

to win her? He knew of no one living to whom he was attracted as he had been toward her. He could not help feeling the charm of her presence, and yet he did not know exactly his own mind regarding her; he could not at that moment analyze his own heart, and so something kept him from speaking the words that would have bound her to him.

In striking contrast to this fascinating woman there arose, strangely enough, the picture of Gertrude as he had last seen her, when she had stood on the porch at Livingstone Elms, with that pained face, those stony eyes, and that despairing attitude, while he could almost seem to hear again that agonized tone, as she had said, "Oh, Allan, I am sorry, sorry for everything!" and there was in his heart at that moment a tenderer feeling for her than for any other being in the world.

He could look back now and see how from that hour he had been growing to love her with a depth and fervor that he had never believed possible.

True, she had drifted out of his life, and he felt free to choose whom he would to share his future, and why should he not choose Blanch Van Ausdel?

But, no—the influence of his recent sorrow was too strong to admit of his speaking words of love to another at present.

All this had passed through his mind with lightning-like rapidity during the brief pause that had ensued after Blanch's last remark to him, and no one would have suspected the sad memories that had been stirred within him as he said, in return, with a quiet smile:

"You hardly know! I imagined that all young ladies were eager for a European trip."

"Yes; and I have been. I was extremely anxious to go with my sister, but it did not seem best then, and now I seem to have lost the desire. Perhaps it is

because I have had so much pleasure here this winter," she replied, looking up half shyly into his eyes.

"It has been a pleasant season, Miss Van Ausdel, and I trust it may prove but the earnest of many more to you." He arose as he spoke, adding: "I hope this question of joining your sister will not be such a very vexatious one to settle. I will run around in a day or two to learn the result of your deliberations upon the subject."

He held out his hand to her in his usual frank manner, and then took his leave.

Ten minutes later the polished society belle might have been seen lying prone upon her face on her couch, weeping in the utter abandonment of grief.

Doctor Livingstone went home in a very serious frame of mind. It seemed as if the world had used him very unkindly during the last few years. He had been the football of disagreeable circumstances, and he rebelled against his lot with a bitterness that was foreign to his nature.

"Oh, Gertrude, I never realized before how much you might have been to me!" he murmured, with unsteady lips, as he struck a match and lighted the gas in his office.

The flood of light streaming through the room revealed a letter lying upon his table. The superscription was in his father's handwriting, and looked very irregular for his usually bold and elegant penmanship. He tore it open, a second letter dropping out and falling on the floor as he did so.

Allan's quick eyes scanned the few lines that his father had written—lines that had evidently been penned hastily and under great excitement—while his face grew ghastly white as he read, and his hand shook until the papers rattled.

When he had finished he reeled dizzily, then staggered to a chair, into which he sank, and sat staring



vacantly down at that other letter lying upon the floor.

"Thank Heaven I did not do it!" burst from his white lips, with a groan that echoed with a hollow sound through the room.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### A CASTAWAY RESCUED.

On the fifth of August and the day after Allan Livingstone's return from abroad, when, amid the rain and gloom, the distracted friends of Gertrude were straining every nerve to find the missing girl, a noble steamer swung with stately grace from her moorings in New York Harbor, and swept slowly out from among a forest of other vessels, and was thus fully launched upon her course.

She was crowded with passengers. Slowly the majestic vessel sailed down the harbor, leaving the busy city behind, growing less and less distinct to those on shore, who were still watching her, until she finally faded from their sight altogether.

Just below Sandy Hook the pilot took his leave. On and on she went, her mighty engines sending heavy pulsations from stem to stern, till all at once they ceased, and the passengers were suddenly aroused to a sense that something was wrong at the very beginning of their voyage. There seemed to be quite a commotion among some of the sailors who were gathered in a knot amidships; then a lifeboat was manned and lowered from the davits, and the men pulled vigorously away toward a small object that could be discerned on their bow.

"What is it? Has anything happened? Are we in danger?" were some of the questions that were poured upon the captain from the scores of people who

flocked around him to learn the cause of these strange movements.

No, nothing had happened; there was no danger, he said, only a small boat had been discovered just ahead of them, and there seemed to be some one in it in a helpless condition, and he had sent some of the crew to investigate matters.

Everybody was on the alert now, and the deck of the vessel was crowded with eager watchers, anxious to learn who the unfortunate occupant of that tiny craft might be.

Strong glasses were brought to bear upon it, and they could readily see that the boat was but a dainty toy, wholly unfit to battle with the strong waves of the ocean. It appeared to be white, with a line of gold painted around its edge, while in the bottom it was evident some person was lying insensible.

The lifeboat was not long in reaching the object its crew were in pursuit of, and while one sailor steadied the little craft, the other lifted an apparently lifeless form from it into their own boat, and then they rowed quickly back toward the steamer, leaving the other to the mercy of the waves of the ocean, much to the disgust of the captain, who called them a couple of fools for their thoughtlessness in so doing.

The sympathies of every one were at once enlisted for the unfortunate castaway, who, it was discovered, was a woman, and many hands were reached forth to receive the slight form as it was carefully lifted on deck.

"What a lovely face!" exclaimed a beautiful and gracious woman who was standing near, as she caught a glimpse of the clear, regular profile and the nut-brown hair sweeping away in rich masses from the white forehead. "Poor child! How came she in such a strait? And is she dead?"

The sailors thought she was, but she was given into

the hands of the ship's surgeon, and borne away to a stateroom, to see what could be done for her restoration.

It will be surmised at once that the inanimate stranger was Gertrude Livingstone. It will be remembered that she had grown nearly wild with nervous excitement during the long hours of the day of Allan's return, and had finally gone for a row upon the water, hoping to be able to work off something of her restlessness before her return.

She entered her boat, and pushed off boldly from the shore, and then bent all her strength to her oars, while her light craft almost flew over the sunlit waters.

But though her stroke was strong and steady, her mind was not upon her occupation; she was, instead, following, in imagination, Allan on his way from New York, and wondering how he would meet her—how he would bear the sad tidings awaiting him, while those dreadful words that she had read in his last letter kept repeating themselves over and over in her brain:

"I dread to meet Gertrude—dread to claim her as my wife!"

She must have rowed more than an hour when she suddenly realized that she ought to be at home dressing for the return of the wanderer. She was upon the point of turning her boat about, when a seagull that had evidently been frightened by something came skimming low over the waves and flapped directly into her face, so startling and hurting her that she sprang from her seat, crying out with fear and pain, and dropping one of her oars in the act.

The impetus thus given to her boat sent it quite a distance from the lost oar, and it went floating away far beyond her reach. She tried to paddle toward it with the remaining one, but she was trembling with nervousness and was so weak from the start she had received that she made no headway.

She glanced back toward the shore and viewed with dismay the distance that lay between it and her.

Her oar was floating rapidly away, dancing up and down upon the blue waves with a lightness that almost seemed to mock at her helplessness. Could she ever paddle back to land with the one she had left?

She feared not, and now she became conscious that the wind had changed and was slowly blowing her out to sea.

"What shall I do?" she cried in consternation. "How thoughtless—how reckless I have been!"

She looked in every direction for some other boat or a sail. There were none near enough to be of any service to her, and it was evident that she must depend upon herself alone.

She seized her oar again and renewed her efforts to return; but it was of no use. The wind was rising and was stronger than all the force that she could bring to bear against it, and at last she sank wearily down and allowed her boat to drift whither it would, but hoping that some vessel would ere long cross her track and come to her aid.

After a time darkness settled down upon the ocean, and a fine rain began to fall. Gertrude, in despair, lay down in her boat and drew the skirt of her dress about her shoulders, for she was fast becoming benumbed with the cold. It was dreadful to be left to such a fate.

"Must I be lost?" she murmured mournfully, as the darkness grew more dense, the rain more chill. "I am young to die; but perhaps it is best that Allan and I should not meet—perhaps it is best that he should be freed from the irksome tie that binds him, from the wife whom he dreaded to meet and claim."

She finally fell into a kind of stupor, and knew nothing more until, two days later, consciousness was restored, and she found herself on board a great At-

lantic steamer, and learned that her boat had drifted across its track, and she had been rescued from her perilous position by some of the crew.-

The first thing she saw when she came to herself was the face of a beautiful woman bending over her. It was a face full of pity and kindness, and the sweet, gentle eyes, looking into hers, inspired her instantly with trust, almost with affection.

"Ah," breathed the lady, in a soft, satisfied tone, "you are really better to-day. Do you think you can take a little of this beef tea if I feed it to you?"

She lifted a bowl from the table beside her as she spoke.

"Yes," Gertrude said weakly, and regarding the stranger with surprise. "But where am I, and what is that noise?"

"You are on board a steamer, and the noise you hear is made by the engines and machinery," replied the lady, with a charming smile.

"A steamer! Oh, then, I am saved!" breathed Gertrude, looking enlightened, and with a long-drawn sigh of thankfulness. She was glad to be alive, after all.

"Yes, you are saved; but I must not let you talk any more. Take this now and everything shall be explained to you by and by," returned her companion, while she fed her, as she would have fed a little child, with the nourishing soup the stewardess had prepared for her.

Gertrude fell into a deep slumber immediately afterward, and slept long and restfully.

She had nearly perished out on the open sea, with no protection from the rain and cold, and when the ship's surgeon took her under his care her vitality was at such a low ebb he feared he should have a hard battle to restore the suspended animation. But his efforts



were successful, although Gertrude had taken a severe cold and was quite delirious for a couple of days.

When Gertrude awoke again, she found the same beautiful woman beside her.

"How kind you are to stay with me," she said. "I am sure I must have given you a great deal of trouble."

"No, indeed, you have not; but I am so glad you are so much better to-day. We have feared you would have a long run of fever."

"What day is it?" Gertrude asked thoughtfully.

"Friday."

A look of astonishment shot into the girl's beautiful eyes.

"Friday!" she repeated.

It was Tuesday afternoon when she had gone out rowing and been cast adrift.

"Yes," returned her companion; "it was Wednesday afternoon when you were found insensible in your little boat. Our steamer left New York at noon, and you were picked up four or five hours later. We all feared you were dead when you were taken on board, but the surgeon has done his best for you, and deserves great credit for his skill. You have been very ill, though, and I was so sorry for you, and so—so attracted that I could not keep away from you, and have come at all hours to learn how you were getting on and to give the stewardess a little rest now and then."

"You are very kind," Gertrude said gratefully, tears starting to her eyes at such evident sympathy.

"Of course, no one knows who you are and every one is very anxious to learn how you happened to be in such a perilous condition," the lady resumed. "Your friends, too, must be distracted about you, and, as we are still five or six days from Liverpool, it will be some time yet before they can be informed of your safety."

"What became of my boat?" Gertrude asked.

"The sailors very thoughtlessly neglected to bring it along when they rescued you. I suppose the good-natured fellows only thought of getting you safely on board, so the boat was left to drift."

"If it is found they will think I am drowned," murmured Gertrude, as if communing with herself.

"Yes, your friends must be in a pitiable state of mind regarding your condition," observed the lady, regarding her lovely patient curiously.

She thought she had referred in rather a strange, indefinite way to her friends. But even while Gertrude had been speaking, like a shock there had come this thought to her:

Why not allow her friends to believe her dead—drowned—as they would be likely to do, if her boat was found, or even if it was not? Allan would thus be freed from all dread of meeting her. Mr. Livingstone would not grieve very much for her—he had evidently cared more for her money than for herself. Mrs. Livingstone was gone, and she had been the only one in the family who had really loved her. Miss Frothingham had always been kind to her when she had visited at her sister's, and she believed she could have learned to love her if they had lived together for any length of time; but, of course, there was no very strong bond between them as yet, and the gentle lady would only grieve moderately over her supposed sad fate.

Her heart throbbed with a feeling of relief at the thought of the freedom which such a course would bring her. True, she had no money, no friends to aid her; she would be absolutely penniless, but she had energy and talent, and she was sanguine enough to believe that she should succeed in taking care of herself.

She never once thought of the trying position in

which Allan would be placed in carrying out this plan; that, believing himself released from all responsibilities by her supposed death, his affections might become engaged by some one else, and be led into unconscious wrong, if not crime.

"My name is Overton—Mrs. Howard Overton," observed her companion, rousing her from the fit of musing into which she appeared to have fallen, "and, while you are placed in such trying circumstances, will you allow me to be your special friend and banker? Of course, you must be cared for until you can communicate with your friends."

"You are very kind and thoughtful," Gertrude said tremulously, for she was deeply touched by the delicate proposition, "but," glancing at the *robe de nuit* which she wore, and other comforts which surrounded her, "I fear I have been unconsciously trespassing upon your goodness, more than I ought, already."

"Not 'trespassing'—that is an unpleasant word," returned Mrs. Overton, smiling. "I was only too glad to supply your needs, and I have an abundance of everything, as we intend to remain abroad for several months. Now, tell me, please, what I shall call you, for I feel awkward not to know how to address you?"

A faint flush swept over Gertrude's white face at this request, and she hesitated before replying.

"You may call me Helen, or Miss Richards, whichever you prefer," she said, after that instant's hesitation, and looking up at her new friend with a smile.

Her name was really Gertrude Helen and her mother's maiden name had been Richards, so she felt free to use it if she chose. Mrs. Overton regarded her earnestly for a moment. She half suspected the beautiful stranger had given an assumed name, and she felt a little disturbed about it. But, upon second thought, she argued that she might have done so because she

feared or disliked to make herself conspicuous, if the facts of her strange adventure should become noised abroad.

"Thank you," she said gravely, "then I will begin by calling you Miss Richards, and perhaps by and by, when we become a little better acquainted, I may feel free to use the friendly title of Helen—which, by the way, is a favorite name of mine.

"Now," she added more brightly, "I am going to tell the surgeon how much better you are, and see what can be done about getting you up on deck to-morrow, where the fresh air will do you more good than medicine," and with a nod of her shapely head and a kindly smile, she disappeared from the stateroom.

The next morning Gertrude, though still weak, was able to be carried up on deck. She was exceedingly pale, but her clear-cut, regular features, her beautiful hair, and her magnificent eyes, not to mention the romance of her position, made her an object to attract the attention of every passenger on board the vessel.

She was not strong enough to pay much heed to what was going on about her, and for two days lay very quietly in her chair, looking off over the broad expanse before her, and thinking very steadily regarding her future course of action.

The third morning, when she made her appearance on deck, Mrs. Overton greeted her with a joyful exclamation.

"How much better you are looking this morning!" she cried. "Really, I begin to pride myself upon being an excellent nurse."

"Indeed, you have a right to do so," Gertrude replied, "for the stewardess tells me that I owe very much to you. Believe me, Mrs. Overton, I am extremely grateful."

Mrs. Overton was wrapping the robes carefully about her, but, as she said this with starting tears and

a quivering lip, she leaned impulsively forward, kissed the fair cheek that lay so near her, and then blushed at her own boldness.

"Pardon me," she said, "but, do you know, I could not help it, you look so pretty, and I am so glad you are improved. Somehow I feel as if you almost belonged to me. It seems providential that we are on this steamer; we intended to sail three days earlier, and were booked to do so; but Mr. Overton found he could not quite get through with his business in New York, so we were obliged to make a change. If we had not made it we should have missed you; how I wish we could keep you with us until we return! I cannot bear the thought of parting with you."

"You perceive, Miss Richards, that it was a clear case of love at first sight with my wife," smilingly remarked Mr. Overton, who was standing near and had heard the whole of this pleasant little speech.

"And I presume he would like to tell you, also, that it is not the first time I have been guilty of such an indiscretion," retorted his wife, with an arch glance at her husband, accompanied by a charming blush.

Gertrude smiled at their pleasantries, but her heart had leaped at the lady's wish that they might keep her with them.

"Why not?" she asked herself, if she could only make herself useful to the family.

"Shall you make an extensive tour?" she questioned.

"We should be glad to, but cannot on account of the children. Mr. Overton thinks they could hardly bear the travel and sight-seeing which we are ambitious to undertake, so we shall only visit points where we are sure we can make them comfortable; though I know I shall feel dreadfully to go home without seeing Mont Blanc and a dozen other places that would be inaccessible with them."



Gertrude flushed. Oh, if she only dared to make a proposition that had suddenly come into her mind.

"I suppose you might leave them somewhere while you and your husband travel," she remarked.

"Ah, but how could I leave them with strangers," said the fond mother, her loving glance wandering to where her beautiful children stood, hand in hand, looking out over the sunlit waters.

"We have regretted since starting," she resumed, after a moment, "that we did not take some trustworthy person along with us, and leave them in Paris to study French. That would have given us freedom to go where we liked. But, excuse me, Miss Richards, my husband is beckoning me to go on the upper deck. I will exercise a little while, and then I will come back to you. Are you quite comfortable? Is there anything more I can do before I go?"

Gertrude assured her that everything was just right, and fell into a fit of musing when left to herself. Later in the day she coaxed the little girls to her side, and entertained them for an hour or two so charmingly that they became her devoted subjects from that time forth.

"Mamma, Miss Richards is just elegant," Beth, the elder, informed Mrs. Overton that evening when they retired to their stateroom, and little Florence echoed this sentiment by remarking that she had told them "the beautifulest stories that ever was."

It was a hard matter to keep them away from the fair stranger after that, and the merry trio made a very attractive picture, as they sat in a cozy corner under the bridge, forgetful of everything save their own enjoyment and their interest in each other.

On the day before they were to land Gertrude seemed very thoughtful, even depressed, Mrs. Overton thought.

"She is dreading the voyage back, alone and among

strangers," she said to herself, and she tried to think what she could do to make the return pleasant for her.

She was aroused from her thoughts by Gertrude saying suddenly:

"Mrs. Overton, do you remember what you said to me a few days ago about leaving your little girls in Paris for a while?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Would you trust them with me?"

"With you!" cried the lady in astonishment. "Dear child, you do not realize what you are talking about. You must go back directly to your friends, for they cannot fail to be nearly distracted about you."

"I fear there is no one who will grieve very much for me, Mrs. Overton," said Gertrude sadly.

"What can you mean?" returned her companion gravely. "You have every appearance of having been very tenderly reared."

Gertrude's red lips quivered painfully, and the tears started to her eyes.

"I am an orphan," she said mournfully. "My mother died when I was two years of age, and I lost my father when I was ten. I have no relatives that I know anything about, and I have been an inmate of my guardian's family since my father's death. I have not led a very happy life, Mrs. Overton, during this time, although I have not wanted for anything that money could purchase. I did not love my guardian; his wife, however, was like a mother to me, and I was very fond of her; but she died very recently, and now I have no desire to resume my place in their family. I was very unhappy that afternoon when I came out for a row on the water and was swept out to sea. I hardly know whether I was glad or sorry when I came to myself and realized that I had been saved. But I resolved when I found that I was crossing the Atlantic, and being borne, without any act or volition of my own, to

a strange country, that I would not return; that if I could find any way of supporting myself, I would remain dead to my guardian and all the world who have hitherto known me."

"It seems to me that you must have suffered a great deal, Miss Richards, to feel, and reason, and plan like this," said Mrs. Overton, looking very serious, and with a note of disapproval in her tone.

"Oh, I have—you cannot dream how much I have suffered!" Gertrude cried passionately.

"Are you fond of children?" Mrs. Overton asked thoughtfully.

"I think I should be if thrown into their society. I have never known what it was to be with children," Gertrude answered truthfully. She would give no false impression.

"Where were you educated?" Mrs. Overton asked.

Gertrude mentioned the institute from which she had graduated.

"Why!" exclaimed her companion in surprise. "Fanny Long, a dear friend of mine, graduated there two years ago. Did you know her?"

Gertrude colored crimson, and saw that she had made a blunder in telling where she had been at school.

"Yes," she admitted falteringly; "but," with an appealing glance at her friend, "she did not know me by the name that I have given you."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Overton, with a little smile. "I mistrusted that Helen Richards was not your real name."

"Helen is my own name, and Richards was my mother's before her marriage. Dear Mrs. Overton," Gertrude pleaded, "please do not imagine, because I did not tell you who I really am, that there is anything wrong in my life, for there is not; only the force of circumstances has served to make me very unfortunate

about some things. Sometime I will tell you all about it; but, truly, I cannot bear to talk of it just now."

And, looking into her sad, yet frank, clear eyes. Mrs. Overton felt that she spoke the truth, and was willing to let her take her own time to confide in her.

"When did you leave school?" she asked.

"This summer."

"Would you mind telling me your age?"

"No, indeed; I shall be twenty-one in about five months. I did not care very much about study or school," she continued, flushing, as she recalled what had led her to care, "until I was sixteen; then my ambition was aroused, and I have done my best since to make up for lost time. I entered Hilton three years ago last February, and took my diploma this summer."

"I am glad that you have confided this much to me," Mrs. Overton said, with a kind smile; "but, indeed, Miss Richards, I cannot understand how you can feel justified in keeping the fact of your existence from your guardian."

"I do feel justified," Gertrude answered spiritedly. "My guardian has done me the greatest wrong that it was in his power to do. I have never forgiven him; I believe I never can forgive him. He has forfeited my respect, my confidence, and betrayed his trust, and I will not go back to him. I will live upon a crust first."

Mrs. Overton did not make any reply to all this. She saw that the girl was determined to follow out her plan, and she did not feel at liberty to say more to dissuade her from it. She stole away after a while, and went to talk it over with her husband. He looked grave when he heard the young stranger's story.

"I do not like it," he said. "It does not look right—this desire to hide from everybody, allowing them to entertain a false belief regarding her. There is something wrong somewhere."

"She says her guardian has done her a great wrong—has forfeited her confidence and respect," said his wife.

"Yes, but she leaves us in the dark about it. Of course we cannot force her confidence, and I do not know as it is strange she does not give it more freely, since we are utter strangers to her. It speaks well for her that she graduated at Hilton, and I must confess there is an irresistible charm about her."

"How would it do, Howard, to invite her to remain with us while we are in England?" queried Mrs. Overton. "There will be a good many places we shall wish to visit evenings when it will not do to take Beth and Florence, and we shall feel much more comfortable to leave them with some one whom we know at the hotels where we stop. We ought to be able to judge, by the time we are ready to start for the Continent, whether she is a suitable person to leave with the children."

"You may do just as you like, Grace," replied her husband. "I confess I should feel conscience-smitten to leave her in Liverpool, no one knows to what fate."

Mrs. Overton went back to Gertrude with very bright eyes and a flush of pleasure on her beautiful face.

"You are to go to London with us, if you will," she said softly, as she leaned over the back of Gertrude's chair; "then we will see later what arrangements we can make for you. Mr. Overton and I think it would be nice to have you look after the girls when we go out by ourselves. Will you go with us?"

"You know I shall be only too glad to go with you, and it is very kind in you to be willing to take me, under the circumstances," Gertrude answered gratefully, and then a sudden rush of tears choked her utterance, while she felt as if Providence had "tempered the wind to the shorn lamb."



A few moments after, she looked up into the face still bending over her, and added:

"Please promise me, Mrs. Overton, that, if you have occasion to mention me in any of your letters home, you will not tell *how* I happen to be in your employ."

"I give you my word that I will tell nothing until you give me leave," Mrs. Overton returned kindly.

The steamer arrived at Liverpool the next day. The Overtons spent a couple of weeks in the city, making excursions to numerous points of interest in the vicinity, and going thence to London, where they contemplated remaining two months.

Every day only served to deepen their interest in Gertrude and endear her to them. The children, Beth and Florence, became very fond of her, and she of them, for they were exceedingly interesting girls, quick to learn, and unusually mature for their years.

"Miss Richards," laughingly remarked Mrs. Overton one day, "I am growing very jealous of you."

Gertrude was seated at the table in their private parlor, where she was teaching the children to paint in water colors—a pastime which afforded them great delight.

"How so?" she asked, looking up from her work with a smile.

"Because my girls are learning to love you so—you make them do anything you like; they are crazy to be with you all the time; mamma is of little consequence now," Mrs. Overton responded in the same playful strain.

But she was half smothered with kisses almost before she ceased speaking.

"No, no, mamma, we do not love Miss Richards best—only *next* best," Beth affirmed, with a troubled face. "No one could ever be quite like you, mamma; but Miss Richards teaches us so many pleasant things

to do; she paints so beautifully, and sings so delightfully, we can't help liking her."

"There, there, you darlings, do not choke me quite," remonstrated Mrs. Overton, but greatly amused at being taken literally. "I was only joking, pet. Of course I want you to like Miss Richards."

"How literal children are!" she added to Gertrude, as she kissed them and sent them back to their work. "But, really, I am surprised at the influence you have acquired over them during the short time you have been with us."

"Perhaps the secret of it is, that I am growing so fond of them," Gertrude responded; and then a little sigh escaped her as she thought perhaps she might not be with them much longer.

"We are going to Paris next week, Miss Richards. Will you keep on with us?" Mrs. Overton asked, abruptly, after a short pause.

Gertrude looked up with tremulous lips.

"You know I will if you wish me to, Mrs. Overton. I have not been so happy since I left school as I have been with you," said Gertrude, with grateful tears in her eyes.

"I want you to go out with me this afternoon," Mrs. Overton said, by and by. "I am anxious for you to have a nice traveling suit, and something pretty for evening wear. Mr. Overton gave me this check for you this morning, and, as I am very fond of spending money, I am going to help you make your selections—if you will allow me."

She laid a check for a generous amount on the table beside Gertrude as she ceased speaking.

Gertrude glanced at it, and flushed crimson.

"Mrs. Overton," she said, "I am not entitled to anything like that, and, indeed, I am quite content with what you have already been kind enough to provide me from your wardrobe."

Mrs. Overton laughed lightly.

"Well, I am not, if you are, and I am going to claim the privilege of helping you shop this afternoon."

Gertrude felt that it would hardly do to object any further, and after lunch they took a carriage and drove to Oxford Street to make their purchases.

The next morning brought several letters to the Overtons.

"One from mother, one from my sister, and one from Sadie Nelson. Now I shall have a feast," cried Mrs. Overton, in a voice of delight, as her husband dropped them singly into her lap, and she seized them as eagerly as a child a new toy. She was soon busied in their contents. All at once she turned to her husband:

"Howard, mother writes that Blanch is in San Francisco. Yes"—taking up one of her other epistles, and examining the postmark—"her letter was mailed there. She is visiting Lizzie Farquar."

"Ah!" was the reply that Mr. Overton vouchsafed, for he was intent upon the contents of a business letter.

Mrs. Overton finished her mother's letter, and then took up her sister's, and as she opened it there fell out a picture.

"Oh, Howard, Blanch has had some photos taken. See! Isn't it a charming one?" And she tossed it over to him.

"This is good. Blanch grows handsomer every year, and she is destined to slay some hearts before this season is over, or I lose my guess."

"I shouldn't wonder. I only hope she will make a good match when she does marry. Pass the picture to Miss Richards when you are through looking at it," said Mrs. Overton, turning again to her letter.

Mr. Overton handed it to Gertrude, and she thought she had never looked upon a lovelier face.

"Blanch is pretty," remarked Mrs. Overton, com-

ing to the table after she had finished her letters, and taking up the picture for another look.

"Pretty is hardly the word to use in speaking of such beauty. If that picture is a true likeness of your sister, she must be faultlessly beautiful," said Gertrude earnestly.

"You are right, Miss Richards. Pretty is a tame word to use in connection with Blanch Van Ausdel. She is a magnificent woman," said Mr. Overton.

"Oh, what excessive flattery!" laughed Mrs. Overton, giving him a playful tap upon the shoulder, yet evidently gratified by his tribute to her sister. "I shall have to write Blanch how much you admire her, Howard, though, no doubt, she hears enough of such nonsense as it is. She is having a glorious time, though. She had a delightful trip from Chicago to San Francisco, meeting some very nice people on the way—a young doctor, with his father and an invalid aunt—Livingstone by name—Mercy! Miss Richards, you have upset that whole tumbler of water over that beautiful drawing!"

Mrs. Overton came to a sudden stop in her news, and began to sop up the water with her handkerchief; for Gertrude, at the mention of that familiar name, had received such a shock that her start had wrought the mischief we have described, while all her color fled, leaving her as white as the paper she had been working upon.

"How very awkward of me!" she murmured apologetically.

"Accidents will happen," replied Mrs. Overton kindly, although she added regretfully, "I am afraid you have ruined that lovely drawing, however."

"I can easily make another," Gertrude returned; but her hand trembled so and she felt so weak that she knew she could do no more that day, and she began to gather up the materials to put them away.

"Blanch writes that she is going to stay a couple of months in San Francisco," Mrs. Overton resumed, turning again to her husband, "and expects gay times. Lizzie gave her a brilliant reception a few days after her arrival, and young Doctor Livingstone, as she calls her new acquaintance, was one of the guests. She describes him as being very handsome and talented, and has just returned from a European tour. She says a good deal about him. It would be a little strange if this chance acquaintance should prove to be her fate," she concluded thoughtfully.

"It must come to her some time, I suppose, as it does to us all," her husband remarked, "and if it is to be this young doctor, and he is worthy of her, they shall both have my blessing."

Every word of this was like a knife in Gertrude's heart, while her face was ghastly in its pallor.

She could not wonder that he had been attracted by the lovely girl, who evidently was very much pleased with him, and whose faultless face was burned indelibly upon her brain. But what would be the result of their friendship? Would they learn to love each other?—and if so, what then?

These questions made her heart stand still, and set her brain in a whirl, for, of course, believing that she was dead, Allan would also believe that he was free to wed whomsoever he chose. She had never considered such a possibility as this when she had resolved to let them all remain in ignorance of her existence. She had only thought of getting away from the old life, and of relieving Allan of the presence of the wife whom he "dreaded to meet." But now, as the possible consequences of her rash act rushed upon her, she was appalled by the serious considerations which presented themselves.

Her attention was aroused from these reflections,



and a painful thrill shot through every nerve, as Mrs. Overton remarked:

"I wonder, Howard, if this Doctor Livingstone can be a relative of that Miss Gertrude Livingstone who was at school with Fannie Long, and who was considered such a brilliant scholar?"

"I am sure I cannot say, since I never heard Miss Long mention the lady whom you speak of," replied Mr. Overton rather indifferently.

"Oh, Miss Richards," said Mrs. Overton, suddenly turning to Gertrude, "you were at the same school—did you know this Miss Livingstone?"

The handful of pencils that Gertrude had gathered up went rattling to the floor.

The question had almost taken her breath away, and she felt that she must have an instant to think before replying. She stooped to pick them up, and to hide her colorless face, and answered, as calmly as she could:

"Yes, there was a young lady by that name at Hilton."

"She was remarkably clever, wasn't she?"

This query brought the color into Gertrude's cheeks. She shrank from sounding her own praises, and yet it would not do to depreciate one whom others admired; so she responded:

"She was chosen to deliver the valedictory, which goes to prove that she stood well in her classes."

"She belonged to a wealthy family, didn't she?"

"Yes, I judged so. By the way, Mrs. Overton, did you not promise Beth and Florence that I should take them for a last visit to Westminster Abbey to-day?"

Gertrude felt that she could not sit there a moment longer and be catechized about herself. She had been terribly excited by the events of the last half hour; she was trembling in every limb, and felt that she must get away by herself or she should break down and be-

tray her identity. So she had thus abruptly changed the subject.

"So I did," returned Mrs. Overton, her mind effectually distracted from the previous subject for the time. "I will go and get them ready, for you ought to go while it is fine; we may have rain this afternoon, this London weather is so fickle."

She left the room intent upon her errand, while Gertrude fled to hers, her heart nearly crushed with the burden of doubt and fear that had so suddenly fallen upon it.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

A week later found the Overtons settled in pleasant apartments in Paris, where, after a short rest, Mr. and Mrs. Overton concluded to leave Gertrude and the children while they made a trip to Italy. They were to be gone a month or six weeks, and Gertrude planned many pleasant and useful things for herself and the children to do during their absence.

The afternoons were spent in driving and sight-seeing, and they comprised as joyous a trio as could be found in all Paris. Gertrude seemed to renew her youth. She grew as happy and light-hearted as the children themselves. One day they visited the Cluny Museum, where they spent several hours examining the many curious and interesting objects to be seen there. They had begun to talk of going home about three o'clock, but stopped in the midst of it to examine a cabinet of rare stones, and while thus engaged a party of Americans entered the room.

Gertrude grew pale and began to tremble when she realized that she was in the presence of her own countrymen, for she was in constant dread of meeting some one whom she knew, and of being recognized in return.

She cast one sweeping, frightened glance into the faces of the newcomers, and experienced a feeling of relief to find that they were all strangers, and with her self-possession instantly restored, she turned her attention to the curiosities before her.

Beth and Florence flitted from one thing to another until they came to a collection of ancient dolls that had been thrust into a remote corner, and where they had a merry time at the expense of the quaint playthings which had served to amuse royal babies of a century gone by.

Gertrude was very thankful afterward that they had been thus beguiled, and were not near to observe the startling adventure that came to her unawares.

She had not noticed that any one else had entered the room, until a low, thrilling cry fell upon her ears. She looked up, a faint, sinking feeling at her heart. A young lady was standing directly opposite her with blanched cheeks, and wonder-wide eyes. For an instant the two looked into each other's face and stood motionless.

"Gertrude!" the white lips of the newcomer framed the word, but her voice was scarcely audible.

"Rose," faltered Gertrude, almost as much overcome.

"It is you then," gasped Rose Taylor—Gertrude's old school friend—as she sprang forward with a glad cry—and threw her arms around her former roommate.

"Oh!" she continued, between smiles and tears, "they told me that you were dead—drowned, and I have grieved myself nearly to death over you."

"My poor Rose," Gertrude returned tremulously, as she folded the young girl close to her, "I am sorry that you should have been so pained; but I was not drowned—I was saved, almost miraculously."

"How? Tell me how, and all about it."

"It is a long story; but a steamer bound for Liverpool picked me up far out at sea, and that is how you find me here."

"Oh, I see, they could not take you back, so you had

to come abroad. Did your friends come over to join you?"

"No."

"No! Surely you are not alone in Paris?"

"No. I am with a family who befriended me on board the steamer. The lady—a Mrs. Overton from Chicago—was very kind to me, and now I have the care of her children," Gertrude explained, while she cast an apprehensive glance around to see if her charges were witnessing this interview.

"The care of her children! You! what do you mean, Gertrude?" Rose demanded, in surprise.

"I mean, simply, that I am acting as governess to Mrs. Overton's children," was the quiet reply.

"I cannot understand it. What has become of your fortune? Where is your hus——"

"Hush!" said Gertrude, looking startled, as she observed that a young man was standing not far from them, and watching them with some curiosity. "No one here knows anything of my history," she added in a whisper, "my identity even is a secret."

Rose, looking more and more astonished, drew her friend out of sight behind some tall cabinets, and, passing her arm fondly about her waist, said, gravely:

"Gertrude, what does all this mystery mean? It looks as if something has gone very wrong with you. Surely you will tell me all about it—oh! if I could only make you understand how glad I am to see you," she concluded, almost hysterically.

Gertrude's lips trembled.

"Yes, there is a mystery—I can tell it in a few words," she said, bitterly, "but you must promise that you will not betray me, for—I am dead to all the world and wish to remain so."

"You may be assured that I will not betray your confidence," Rose replied soberly.

Gertrude then rapidly but graphically described the events which led to her involuntary voyage to Europe, her acquaintance with Mrs. Overton, and the acceptance of the position of governess to her children.

"Mr. and Mrs. Overton have gone to Italy," she con-

tinued, "while I am to remain in Paris with her children during their absence. My dear Rose," she continued sadly, but with emphasis, "I am no longer Gertrude Livingstone—my name is Helen Richards."

Rose Taylor regarded her friend with troubled eyes.

"Dear Gertrude, I am afraid you are not doing right," she said gravely.

"Why?" Gertrude asked, flushing consciously.

"First, because it is unkind to your friends to leave them in ignorance of your existence."

"No one will care; Mr. Livingstone never loved anything but my money; he can have it all now, and I told you Allan would be glad to be free," was the somewhat bitter reply.

Rose looked anxious and perplexed.

"But Allan is not free nevertheless. He may believe himself to be so, and he may conduct himself accordingly."

Gertrude was pale now, and looked both weary and troubled.

"Let us talk about something else, Rose," she said, after a minute, and with a shrug of her shapely shoulders; "tell me about yourself. It has done me much good to see your dear face again, and yet, if you had not taken me unawares, I believe I should have avoided even you, for the sake of keeping my secret. But how do you happen to be in Paris just at this time?"

"We are on our way to Rome, to spend the winter there. We were in Switzerland all summer, and I never enjoyed myself so much. I was as happy as the day was long, until I received those dreadful tidings about you. My heart was nearly broken; and now to find you alive and well, after all! Gertrude, I feel as if I could not give you up again; cannot you relinquish your position and come with us? You know we shall be delighted."

"It would be impossible, Rose. I have decided upon my future, and I shall not change my course, though you are very kind to ask me to go with you."

"Well, then, tell me where I can find you, and I will



come and have a long, old-time chat with you to-morrow," she said, smiling.

"We have apartments at number forty-four Rue de Fosse, and oh!"—with a sudden rush of tears to her beautiful eyes—"it will seem like old times to have you all to myself once more."

"I must go now," Rose said, reluctantly releasing her; "I am afraid my friend, Mr. Wellington, will think I have deserted him very unceremoniously, while the rest of our party will believe we are lost."

"Oh, do you belong with that party of Americans that passed through here just before you came into the room?"

"Yes; we lingered to examine some ancient armor; Mr. Wellington has a penchant for some things. Come and let me introduce you."

"I think it would be wiser not to do so," objected Gertrude.

"Indeed, I must; I particularly desire you to know him," persisted Rose, a bright flush suffusing her cheeks.

"Must I present you as Miss Richards?" she added, regretfully.

"Of course, since I am henceforth to be known by that name."

"It is too bad, Gertrude. I have told him so much about my dearest school friend that I wish he could know you as such; but I will do nothing to distress you. Come."

Rose led her out from among the tall cabinets toward her escort, to whom she presented her as an old acquaintance.

Mr. Wellington was evidently deeply impressed by Gertrude's great beauty, and regarded her somewhat curiously.

He might have suspected her identity if he had remained long in her society, because, having heard so much of her from Rose, he was likely to detect something familiar about her; but, some of their party soon returning to look for them, Rose was obliged to bid her friend farewell and take her departure, although

she renewed her promise to visit her on the following day. So she went to spend the next afternoon with Gertrude.

The children had received permission to attend a little tea party, given by one of their English neighbors, and would be absent for several hours, so the two friends enjoyed a long and uninterrupted chat.

Among other things Rose confessed, with a charming blush, that Mr. Wellington, to whom she had introduced Gertrude the previous day, was a very dear friend.

They had met him, she said, while in England, and they had been attracted to each other at the outset. They continued to meet often after that—not by chance, she was very sure—and Mr. Taylor had finally invited him and his mother to join his party, and the result of nearly a year's intercourse had been an engagement between the young man and Rose, which was to be consummated in marriage upon their return to America.

"Mr. Wellington inherits a large amount of property in Illinois, considerable of which is located in a beautiful town not far from Chicago, where I suppose we shall live by and by," Rose said, when concluding this interesting portion of her narrative.

"I am glad that everything looks so bright for your future," Gertrude said, kissing her glowing face, but with a pang in her heart as she contrasted her lot with that of her friend.

"Thank you, dear, and let me tell you it will be all the brighter for having found you once more," Rose said, with tears in her brown eyes. "It seems almost like a dream to find you here in Paris, when I believed I should never see you on earth again."

"But, Gertrude," she added gravely, as she drew a letter from her pocket, "you must write immediately and tell Dr. Livingstone that you are living."

Gertrude flushed hotly.

"Must?" she repeated, somewhat proudly.

"Yes, dear," Rose responded, more gently, "and when I have read this letter to you, you will see the

necessity as I do. It is from Sadie Prescott. You remember Sadie?"

"She was from San Francisco, wasn't she?"

"Yes; and now listen to what she writes. She says:

"I have been having a delightful autumn thus far. The season is very gay, while there are a number of strangers in the city who are being fêted like princes and princesses, which keeps up a continual round of pleasure. I must mention one person in particular—a Miss Blanch Van Ausdel——'"

"Blanch Van Ausdel," repeated Gertrude, with a start.

"Yes; do you know anything of her?" questioned Rose, regarding her friend searchingly.

"Not personally. I have only heard of her. Go on," Gertrude replied quietly, but constrainedly, reading:

"She is the most beautiful person I have ever seen. In face and form she is absolutely faultless, while in manner she is so fascinating that all her acquaintances—both men and women—have become devoted worshippers at her shrine. She is the guest of a Mrs. Farquar, who is very wealthy, and they are exceedingly gay—go everywhere and give the most elegant receptions themselves. And now my most interesting news is to come. There is a Doctor Livingstone here from New York, and he is a relative of the Gertrude Livingstone with whom you were so intimate at school, and who died such a shocking death early in the fall. He appears to have fallen a victim of Miss Van Ausdel's allurements.

"It seems they met each other on their way to San Francisco, and he is now exceedingly attentive to her, while there is no question regarding her preference for him. It is the subject of remark everywhere, and everybody is predicting an early engagement. Doctor L. is very handsome and distinguished in appearance, and yet there is about him a gravity, almost amounting to sternness, that impresses one deeply. I met him at one of Mrs. Farquar's receptions and spoke of Gertrude

to him, remarking that I was at Hilton with her. He betrayed considerable emotion when speaking of her sad fate, and was evidently quite fond of her. I wonder if there might not have been some tenderness between them. I asked him if Gertrude was his sister, and he said, "no—a very dear relative," and I did not like to question him further. However, he will not long be inconsolable if it is in Miss Van Ausdel's power to heal any wounds that he may have received.'"

"There," said Rose, breaking off and refolding her letter, "that is all that will interest you, but do you not see, now, why you must write and tell Allan about yourself?"

"Yes, I see," Gertrude admitted wearily, after a long silence, during which many things had flitted through her mind. "I see that I must write home at once and tell them; but——"

"But what, Gertrude?" questioned Rose gently, while she searched her pale, pained face with a pitying glance.

"I can never write to Allan," the young wife replied, with a hot flush in her cheek.

"Then write to Mr. Livingstone—to any one, so that the truth may be known."

"Yes, I will; I know it is my duty. I must not allow Allan to commit a wrong, or lead another into wrong. I will write this evening," Gertrude promised; and Rose was satisfied, believing that eventually everything would come right.

That evening Gertrude wrote a letter to her guardian. She did not know where to address it, since she supposed he was still traveling, but she resolved to send it directly to Livingstone Elms, and trust to its being forwarded to him. Her letter ran:

"MR. LIVINGSTONE: Doubtless you will be considerably startled upon receiving this from me, and from a foreign country; but I will tell you in as few words as possible how I happen to be in the land of the living, and here. I went out rowing, as you know, on the afternoon of the sixth of August. Accident deprived

me of one of my oars; the wind changed, a storm came up, and I was carried out to sea, where the afternoon of the next day, I was picked up by a steamer bound for Liverpool. I was, of course, obliged to go on with it, and I knew that when you found my empty boat—or even if you never found it—you would believe that I had been drowned. I sometimes feel that it would have been better if such had been my fate, and then your son would have been released from a marriage into which he had been driven against his will, and from a wife whom, as he wrote his mother, he ‘dreaded to claim as such.’ Those few words I saw by chance, as I took the letter from her dear hands, after she died, and put it away in her desk.

“At first I thought I would let you believe me dead. I had no desire to go back to you; my life has been ruined by you, and I do not find it easy to forget the irreparable wrong that you did me, in forcing me upon your son for the sake of my fortune. I was fortunate enough to obtain a pleasant and lucrative situation upon landing, and I preferred to work for a living and remain unknown, rather than return to a home where I could neither be happy nor make others so. Therefore I have kept this long silence. But the thought has come to me, that, if I allowed this false impression to prevail, deeper trouble than the past has held might come to your son, and perhaps to others also; consequently I feel it my duty to apprise you of the fact that I am still living. But I intend to remain abroad—I have no wish to return to Livingstone Elms. I am living quietly and pleasantly with congenial people, and find a life of usefulness not at all irksome. If your son desires to break the tie that binds us, I am perfectly willing that he should take measures to do so; more than that I most earnestly desire it, if, by so doing, his happiness and usefulness may be increased. No reply to this will be necessary, indeed, it would not reach me, as I am with a family who are traveling; while, as you may surmise, I am not now known by the name of

GERTRUDE LIVINGSTONE.”



And this was the letter that fell to the floor, when Allan Livingstone opened that one from his father, after returning to his office from a call upon Blanch Van Ausdel.

We can understand now why he uttered those grateful words—"Thank God, I did not do it!"—after the struggle that had been going on in his mind regarding the relations he hesitated about assuming with the beautiful girl. Gertrude's letter had been forwarded, as she had hoped, to Mr. Livingstone, and he had sent it to his son. To Allan it came like a message from the dead.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE SEPARATION.

When **Mr.** Livingstone received Gertrude's letter from Paris, the shock that he sustained unnerved him completely for several days. The knowledge that she was alive and well, after all that he had suffered on her account, was of itself sufficient to upset him; but to be told in that cold, formal, decisive way that she never intended to return to her home, that she preferred to work for her daily bread, and that she "most earnestly desired" a separation from Allan, were blows to his pride and self love that made him writhe with torture.

As soon as he could collect himself sufficiently to do so, he wrote to Allan to inform him of the strange news that he had received and inclosed Gertrude's letter to him.

"DEAR ALLAN: The inclosed epistle will explain itself, and it has given me the worst turn I ever had in my life. It seems that Gertrude is still living, but refuses to return to occupy her proper position in life. I am inclined to advise you to adopt the measure she suggests and let her go her own way if she wants to;

but what in thunder shall we do with her fortune? I'm too upset to write more.

"Your affectionate father,

"ROBERT LIVINGSTONE."

We know how Allan had been affected upon reading this letter; how all his strength had forsaken him, and he had sunk into a chair, where he sat staring blankly at that missive lying upon the floor at his feet, and feeling almost as if it contained a message from the dead. He finally stooped and picked up the letter, his hand trembling, his face startingly pale, and his lips painfully compressed.

"What a strange fate has been ours, my Gertrude," he murmured, as he touched his lips to the characters she had traced upon the envelope. "Had I been wiser than I was, I never should have yielded to my father's commands and threats—I ought, as it was, to have had more consideration for you."

He opened the slightly perfumed epistle and read it through, his face growing graver and more pained and stern with every line.

No one can understand the bitter pain that filled his heart, as he sat there and recalled the past, realizing how strangely he had learned to love the wife who once he had believed would never be congenial to him; whom he had almost repudiated with disgust, and from whom he had been so singularly parted, just as his eyes were opening to the fact that she had grown necessary to his happiness.

He became conscious all at once that the glamour that had surrounded Miss Van Ausdel had vanished. The knowledge that Gertrude was alive created a longing for her, a desire for her love and companionship, that threw everything else in the shade.

There was not much sleep for Allan that night. He walked the floor of his office until four in the morning, his mind filled with bitter reflections, and then, wearied out, he threw himself upon a lounge, where he lay, still thinking, thinking until daylight came and he had to begin the business of life again.

He was greatly troubled also upon Miss Van Ausdel's account. He knew well enough that she had been gradually yielding her affections to him, although he had never uttered one word to her that an ordinary friend might not have spoken to her.

When morning came Allan looked as if he had had a long illness. His sleepless night and troubled thoughts had worn upon him sadly. But he went about his business as usual, and endeavored to bestow his customary interest and attention upon his patients.

During the forenoon, as he was passing down Michigan Avenue to visit a little child, of whom he had grown very fond during a protracted sickness, he came face to face with Blanch Van Ausdel.

She cried out in sudden alarm upon seeing him:

"Doctor Livingstone, what has happened to you?"

"Happened?" he questioned, as if he did not comprehend her meaning.

"Yes; you are looking perfectly wretched this morning."

"I received rather startling news last evening, which disturbed my rest somewhat," he answered gravely.

"Your news must have been of a serious nature, I imagine, to make you look like that," she said, studying his face with a troubled look.

"It will necessitate my leaving Chicago for a while. I am planning to go away immediately."

"Does immediately mean to-day?" Blanch asked, trying to smile, though her face lost all its color at the unexpected intelligence.

"It means to-morrow, if I can arrange to go so soon; and, Miss Van Ausdel, I will come around and say good-by this evening, if you will allow me."

She brightened instantly. Her eyes drooped—a conscious light gleaming in their azure depths.

She believed he was coming to tell her of his love, and claim her promise to be his wife when he should return.

"Come, by all means," she returned, flashing him a

thrilling glance; "but I trust your good-by will not be for very long. Surely, you cannot meditate a protracted absence," she added anxiously.

"I cannot tell how long; it will depend on circumstances. But more of this to-night. I must be away to my patients now."

He lifted his hat, bade her good morning, and turned away; but all day long her look and tones haunted him, and he felt that it would be far better for him to leave Chicago at once, for he could plainly perceive that his remaining would only serve to endanger the peace of Blanch Van Ausdel's life still more.

At eight o'clock that evening he stood before her door, and on entering was shown into a small parlor, where she was evidently awaiting him.

She gave Allan her hand as he entered, and swept a quick, anxious look into his eyes.

"I hope you have not given up any engagement for me this evening," he said, glancing at her rich attire, and wondering if she knew how very lovely she looked.

"To be truthful, I must confess that I have," she replied; "but I was only too glad to do so, for I could not enjoy myself anywhere while your white, troubled face of this morning was haunting me."

"I regret that my appearance should have caused you any discomfort, and I will not keep you in suspense regarding my departure. I received a letter from my father last evening, containing news that will oblige me to return to Europe immediately."

"Return to Europe!" Blanch repeated, suddenly growing white to her lips.

"Yes," Allan replied, with a pang, as he noticed her white lips. "I had no thought of anything of the kind when I left you last evening. It is a very sudden move, and it is a great trial to me to give up my practice just as I have become so nicely established; but yet," he added, with a dreamy, wistful look, "if I succeed in my mission abroad, I shall feel that it was well worth the sacrifice."

"Shall you be absent long?" Blanch inquired, trying hard to suppress the tremble in her voice.

"I cannot tell," he answered gravely; "I hope not. And now, Miss Van Ausdel, let me thank you for your kindness to me, a stranger in your city. I have spent many pleasant hours in your society, and when I return, if I come here to resume my relations with Doctor Fosdick, I trust you will welcome me as an old friend."

"I cannot feel otherwise than proud to know that Doctor Livingstone desires to remain my friend, and you may be sure of a warm welcome whenever you return."

He held out his hand to her, saying earnestly:

"Farewell, Miss Van Ausdel; and may every blessing and joy allotted to woman become yours."

She accompanied him to the hall, and wished him good night, and said good-by with a proud composure that sat well upon her and compelled his profound admiration; but the sound of the door, as it closed after him, was like the knell to all her hopes.

Allan went directly to Doctor Fosdick, and frankly told him the whole story of his life.

"If I do not find my wife, doctor, I will come back to you," he said, but feeling strangely depressed over the uncertainty before him. The two men parted with a hearty hand clasp, though with many regrets, for a tender friendship had been formed between them during the few months of their partnership.

Two days later Allan Livingstone was in New York making inquiries at the offices of the different steamer lines regarding the finding of a young girl at sea the previous fall.

He was successful in finding the captain of the steamer that had rescued Gertrude, and learned from him the circumstances of the romantic incident. But after she had been given into the hands of the surgeon, and he had issued orders that she receive every necessary attention, he appeared to feel that his personal responsibility was at an end, and he had paid no further attention to her. He knew that a lady and



gentleman on board had been very kind to her, but he could not remember their names.

This was **very** disheartening, and Allan hardly knew what to do. It seemed like a piece of folly to go on with no clew to work upon, and he was half tempted to return to Chicago and his business, and give up his quest entirely. But he knew he could not rest content—he should be restless, miserable, and useless, in his practice, while he remained in such a state of uncertainty regarding Gertrude. Now that he knew she was living he was possessed with an intense longing for her, an insatiable desire to find her and win the love which once he had so lightly prized.

“No, I will go on—I will seek her everywhere for a year, trusting to my mother’s description to help me recognize her. I should never be satisfied not to try, so I will spend a year in the search; then, if I fail, I will return to Doctor Fosdick, as I promised.”

He went directly to Paris, resolving to make that his starting point, since her letter had been written there.

Here he remained two months; but all to no purpose, for he could not obtain the slightest clew, and finally concluded, and rightly, that she must have left Paris either before or soon after his arrival there.

He repaired to Florence, Venice, and Rome, spending several weeks in each place, but with the same result, and hope deferred finally began to make his heart sick.

“I shall never find her,” he said, in despair, when one day he returned to his hotel in Brussels, nearly ill with fatigue and anxiety. “I believe it is a useless task for me to go roaming over the world in search of a will-o’-the-wisp that always eludes my grasp. And yet I cannot bear to give it up. I know I shall never be satisfied until I find my wife.”

He had been standing in a vestibule leading to an art gallery, inspecting some photographs, while commenting thus, but turned his head as the sound of a step and trailing garments fell upon his ears. The

next moment a beautiful woman passed him, and entered a small reception parlor, a few steps beyond where he stood.

Allan Livingstone started, and a sudden shock seemed to thrill him.

"Tall, with finally developed figure, that has a certain grace in every movement; a face that is as pure as marble, yet glows with health and warmth; nut-brown hair, and eyes of wonderful gray;" that was my mother's description of her, and I have seen no one yet who answers to it so fully as this lovely girl who has just vanished from my sight," he murmured thoughtfully, as he gazed into the room whither the lady had disappeared.

Presently some one struck a few chords upon a piano, and then a clear, rich voice broke into song. Allan stood listening, his fine face kindling with interest and admiration, as the birdlike tones soared aloft in such melody as he had rarely heard.

"My mother wrote me that Gertrude had an exquisite voice; can it be possible that I have found her at last?" he asked himself, his heart leaping with a sudden sense of exultation at the thought.

The conviction continued to grow upon him and he resolved that he would not lose sight of the beautiful girl who had so attracted his attention, until he had ascertained who she was. But he saw nothing more of her until the next day at dinner, when she appeared at table with an elderly gentleman and lady, who appeared to be exceedingly fond of her.

After dinner he went to the office of the hotel and looked over the books, to see if he could find the names of the trio in whom he had become so suddenly interested. He knew they must be newcomers, for he had seen no such persons before during his stay of a week.

He found three names, which he thought must be theirs, among the arrivals of the previous day:

"Mr. and Mrs. Webster and Miss H. G. Webster, Chicago, Illinois, U. S. A."

Allan felt greatly elated upon reading this.

The people were Americans; the young lady bore no resemblance to the lady and gentleman who attended her, and he had noticed that she addressed them as "auntie" and "uncle," while her first two initials were the same as Gertrude's. Her name was Helen Gertrude, and he found himself reasoning that these people must have become interested in her when she was rescued from her peril at sea, and, learning, perhaps, something of her history and desire to sever all former ties, had taken a fancy to make a traveling companion of her—perhaps had even wished to adopt her.

The more he thought of it, the more firmly convinced he became that he was at last upon the right track; and he grew so restless and impatient to solve the mystery that it was with difficulty he could wait for another day to come, in order to plan some way for introducing himself to the Websters as a fellow countryman.

There was no sleep for him that night; he had so wrought himself up with the belief that his search was about to end in success that it was not until daylight had begun to dawn that he was able to lose himself in an uneasy slumber, when he dreamed that he had followed Gertrude from one end of the world to the other, only to see her finally vanish from his sight as if she had suddenly dropped into a bottomless abyss.

When he at last awoke, he heard a clock striking eight. He bounded from bed, and hastily dressing, hastened below to his breakfast. The Websters were not present, and their places were occupied by strangers.

He inquired of the waiter where the people who had sat there the evening before were.

"Ah, monsieur—Madame and Mademoiselle Webster?" questioned the man.

"Yes," Allan assented, with a thrill of satisfaction that he had at least been right as to their identity.

"Gone!" was the laconic reply, given in French.

"Gone! Where?"

"To London, via Havre, monsieur, at seventy."

Allan's appetite suddenly vanished, and a gray pallor, occasioned by disappointment, settled over his face.

He went to the office, ascertained when the next train left for Havre, paid his bill, and taking a carriage, drove to the station, where he waited, in a fever of impatience, until the train was ready, and he was once more on his way in the wake of his "will-o'-the-wisp," never dreaming how fruitless his search was to be, nor that he had already met and passed his wife, almost at the commencement of his search, when but a word would have revealed her to him, and she had almost spoken that word to betray herself.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### A STRANGE ADVENTURE.

Meanwhile, Gertrude, all unconscious of her husband's anxious search for her, was having a varied experience. While her friend, Rose Taylor, remained in Paris, the time passed delightfully. She forgot her own sorrow, her trying position, everything but that they were together again, and gave herself up to the charm and delight of the old-time friendship. They were almost inseparable.

But the two friends parted at last with many tears and regrets, and Rose Taylor was on her way to Rome.

Only two or three days afterward Gertrude was strolling by herself in the Place de la Concorde; the children had been invited to drive with their little English neighbor, and she was feeling somewhat lonely and depressed, and found herself dwelling gloomily upon her almost friendless condition, and wondering why life should be made so sad for some, so bright and care-free for others,

when all at once she became conscious that some one was following her and watching her every movement.

She turned to see who it was. She found herself face to face with a little old man, thin and cadaverous-looking, his hair white as snow, his face grizzled and unshaven, his small black eyes burning like coals of fire, and fixed with a wild, intent look upon her. His limbs seemed weak and trembling, and he walked with tottering steps.

A strange feeling of fear and aversion crept over Gertrude as she encountered those piercing black eyes and noticed how hungrily they seemed to devour her face; and instinctively she realized at once that the man was insane, and was coming directly toward her, but with what purpose she had no idea.

Her strength forsook her, her heart stood still with fear, and she lost the power to move, while she seemed fascinated, spell-bound, beneath this strange influence so suddenly thrown around her.

As soon as the man saw that he was observed, he stretched forth his hands to her in an appealing way, and cried, in trembling tones, in perfect French:

"Gertrude, Gertrude, have you forgiven me? Have you come back to tell me so? Darling, are you free at last? Has he"—dropping his voice to a sepulchral whisper, as he drew still nearer the affrighted and spell-bound girl—"has he died, and may I claim you now?"

She shrank from him, and yet her feet were rooted to the spot; she could not have flown one step from him, even if he had not laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

Mingled with her fear there was also an undercurrent of wonder and curiosity. The man had called her Gertrude!

How had he learned her name, and what did he mean by the strange questions which he had asked her?

"He must have mistaken me for some one else," she thought; "but how singular that I should resemble some one whom he must have known years ago, and who also bore my name!"

"Why do you not speak to me, Gertrude?" pleaded the madman, in piteous accents, while he tightened his hold upon her arm. "You cannot be angry with me after all



these years. Surely I have suffered enough for that one rash act to atone for it a thousand times. You can never know how I have longed for the sound of your voice—you had a sweet voice in those days, my dear—and if it has not changed more than your face, it must still be a delight to the ear. Ah! how you used to sing! you sang my poor heart right out of my keeping, and I have dreamed I heard you a thousand times, only to awake and find it a delusion of my feverish brain.

"They try to make me believe," he continued, in a hoarse whisper, while he glanced cautiously about, as if he feared the approach of some one, "that I am mad; but I am not, my darling. I have only been wretched and broken-hearted since you disappeared so mysteriously. If they had only let me alone—let me go in search of you, instead of keeping me locked in a cage and chained like a dog in his kennel, I would have been like a lamb for docility. Ha! ha! but 'it's a long road that has no turn.' They won't find me to-day; the gods must have aided me, and released me just in time to find you. But why do you look so coldly upon me, Gertrude? Why do you not speak to me?" he concluded, regarding her hungrily, and bending nearer to look into her eyes.

"Monsieur must have made a mistake," Gertrude began gently, fear making her tones tremulous; "he must imagine that I am some one whom he has known in the past."

"'Mistake!'" cried the maniac fiercely, his eyes glowing like coals—"imagine you are some one else! Ha! ha! You have not forgotten all your coquetry even yet, though one would think you were old enough by this time to have learned better than to play with men's hearts as a child plays at football. Do you think to cheat me thus, to put me off by pretending you are a stranger to me? I have waited too long for this moment to be fooled in any such weak, trifling way."

"But, monsieur——"

"But, Gertrude—is not your name Gertrude?" he questioned fiercely.

"Yes," the frightened girl admitted, too terrified to

remember on the instant that she now called herself something else.

"Aha, you own it, then!" the man cried exultantly. "I knew it. There never could be but one Gertrude with a face like yours. Do you think I could work three long months studying its every lineament and expression, painting this glossy hair, this fair beautiful forehead, and these wonderful eyes—don't you remember how I used to tell you that no one ever had eyes exactly like yours?—and forget what they were like? Do you suppose I could imagine any one else to possess this mouth, with its delicate scarlet lips and its bewitching expression? or this round, childlike chin, with its tiny dimple? or this fine, creamy, satin-smooth skin that was peculiar to you? No, no, my darling. I knew I should find you some time."

He had stroked caressingly her nut-brown hair, had smoothed her white cheek with his bony, wrinkled hand while he talked, and Gertrude had all she could do to keep from shrieking aloud at his touch; but she dare betray no sign of the abhorrence that she experienced.

How would it end? What could she do to release herself from his power and presence? Oh, if some one would only pass that way, or come near enough so that she could beckon for help.

But there was no sound of footsteps anywhere, no human being near enough to whom she dared appeal.

The man must have noticed the swift glance that she shot around, and suspected something of her thought; for his skeleton fingers tightened their hold upon her arm.

"You never saw your picture after it was finished, Gertrude; you never knew how lovely I made you," he began, with a cunning leer; "not too lovely, though, for no one was ever so beautiful as you are. You used me very shabbily to run away after ordering the painting, and never coming to see it finished; but you shall see it now, if you like. Come with me, and I will show it to you."

The young girl's brain reeled at this proposition. What could she do? Her heart beat so heavily that it

seemed as if she must suffocate. The thought of being in the power of this madman—of being compelled to go with him wherever he might choose to lead her—was horrible.

Evidently he had been an artist, and some fair woman must have given him sittings for a portrait during his early life, and who, perhaps, by her coquetry and power of fascination, had won his susceptible heart.

He did not seem to realize that he had grown old, and that the woman whom he had loved must have grown old also; and yet, now and then, there appeared to flit across his mind a memory of days long past.

Perhaps she could convince him that she was not the Gertrude whom he had loved if she could make him realize how he had aged.

"Will monsieur kindly tell me his age?" she asked, summoning all her will power to enable her to speak calmly, and to look him full in the eye.

"What a foolish question! You know I am exactly three years older than yourself," he answered pettishly.

Gertrude removed one of her gloves, and laid her fair white hand beside the wrinkled one that clutched her arm.

"Look!" she said; "your hand is like that of an old man, and mine that of a young girl."

"Bah! 'Tis but a trick of my eyes, or the sunshine," he retorted, with an impatient shrug of the shoulders, though a puzzled look shot into his eyes as he observed the difference.

"But you said it was long ago—you spoke of the old days," persisted Gertrude, but speaking very gently.

"Blot out the sun, and a day will seem an age. When you fled from Paris, my sun went out, and I have been groping in darkness ever since."

"How old was your Gertrude when you painted her picture?"

He laughed a shrill, wild laugh at the question.

"How cunning you are, my darling!" he cried, with a kind of fierce humor, "but you cannot deceive me—you shall not escape me now. You say 'your Gertrude.' Yes, she *was* mine by the right of a sacred love such as

no man ever bore woman before or since. My Gertrude was just twenty-five years old when I painted her glorious beauty, though she did not look a day over twenty, her face was so fair, her brow so unwrinkled by care. And yet she had cares, for that stern, proud husband of hers was as jealous of her as—as death. He loved her, too, though he showed it in a strange way, for he tracked her everywhere. He watched her around corners, crept upon her unawares, laid traps for her; and at last, on that dreadful day in London—— *Mon Dieu!* Don't you remember?

"Of course you do," he cried, gesticulating wildly. "Why am I rehearsing all that fearful story only to set my brain on fire and my blood seething like a lava tide through my veins? Oh, I would have died to have been able to save you from his wrath, Gertrude. I would have lain down at his feet, and let him trample out my life, if it could have turned his fury from you. But it was too late then; for, in my mad worship of you, I had made the grand mistake of my lifetime, and when I came to myself and would have made what apology and restitution I could he was gone—you were gone, and nothing but my picture remained."

"Monsieur," Gertrude said, interrupting him, but speaking very kindly, "cannot I make you understand? You said your Gertrude was twenty-five years old when you painted her portrait. I am not yet twenty-one, and it is less than a year since I left school. I may resemble this lady, but you have made a mistake, for I never saw you until this hour; I never sat to you for a picture; I never had a 'jealous husband' who 'watched and stole upon me unawares,' or 'laid traps for me,' and I have no knowledge of that 'dreadful day in London' to which you refer. I feel very sorry that this trouble has come into your life; and if you wish me to come and look at your beautiful picture, I shall be very glad to do so some day, if you will give me your address."

The poor, demented creature stood regarding her breathlessly while she spoke, his hollow, wrinkled face expressing doubt, perplexity, and conviction, in turn;

then a look of despair leaped into his eyes, only to be followed by a blazing light of fury.

He clutched Gertrude's arm until the long, sharp nails upon his fingers sank into her flesh through her sleeve, and made her grow faint from pain. He bent nearer to her until his hot breath burned her cheek, and looked into her face, while a crafty, mocking smile flickered over his trembling lips.

"You lie!" he hissed in a tone that made her shiver and turn cold; "and you can never cheat me thus. I know it is years, ages, since that dark day when the earth was made a blank to me, and I have suffered the torments of the underworld. But you, with your other tricks, must have learned the secret of perpetual youth, or you could never be so fair. But you are Gertrude. I know you; and you shall come with me; you shall impart your secret to me; and I will begin life over again, and with you for my constant inspiration I will be happy once more."

He turned with a fierce, determined air, still with that painful hold upon her arm, and moved along the path, dragging her after him.

In utter silence they walked along for two or three rods, meeting no one. But all at once they heard the sound of voices and footsteps coming toward them along the graveled path.

The madman stopped short and listened intently. The next moment he whisked her out of the walk behind the trunk of a large tree.

"If you utter a sound I will choke you!" he muttered, in a suppressed, savage tone, and as a significant reminder of the threat he encircled her slender throat with the claw-like fingers of his disengaged hand.

Gertrude felt sure that he meant to do it if she did not heed him, for there was a dead light in his eye; nevertheless she resolved that she would make the most of her opportunity.

Nearer and nearer came the voices and footsteps, then three men appeared in sight. They seemed to be searching for some one, for they were peering all about them, right and left.



"Help!"

The shrill, anguished cry rang startlingly out upon the still air.

But before Gertrude's white lips could utter another syllable there came a fearful pressure on her throat; her brain reeled, her eyesight failed, a horrible roaring was in her ears, and she sank unconscious to the ground, but with that fierce clutch still upon her white neck.

When Gertrude returned to consciousness she found herself lying upon a rustic seat, not far from a beautiful fountain. A pretty French maid, in spotless cap and coquettish bodice, was bending over her, regarding her with anxious, startled eyes, chafing her hands and bathing her face with cool water, and seeming, too, very pitiful and interested.

"Where is he?" Gertrude queried, with a shudder, and glancing wildly about in search of the terrible creature in whose cruel power she had so recently been.

"Ah, mademoiselle has revived—she is better!" cried the girl, showing two rows of brilliant teeth in a gratified smile. "It is well; and the madman—the maniac?—they have carried him away. *Mon Dieu!* How he howled! How he raved! His keepers have been searching for him all the afternoon."

A thrill of horror ran through Gertrude's nerves as she remembered all that had transpired.

She sat up and held out her hand for the glass of water which the girl had obtained for her, and drank freely to drive away the faintness that seemed to be returning as memory thus reasserted itself.

As she did so her glance fell upon the figure of a gentleman who stood leaning against a tree near by, and who also appeared to be watching her intently. She recognized him instantly, and for a moment it seemed as if all her senses were forsaking her again.

It was none other than Frank Winthrop—Rose Taylor's cousin—whom she had met first at Hilton.

But how came he to be there in Paris just at that time? Why was he standing there and watching her? Had he recognized her?

The French girl had noticed her quick glance and marked her startled, indrawn breath.

"It is the monsieur who released mademoiselle from the dreadful madman," she said in a low tone. "He was just behind the keepers and police when her cry for help rang out; and, dashing by them, he seized the maniac and compelled him to let go his hold, then gave him in charge to them. Ah, but it was dreadful! We thought mademoiselle was dead; and, *mon Dieu!* there are great blue marks now on her poor neck where his cruel fingers pressed."

Darts of pain ran through Gertrude's nerves as her recent peril was thus vividly recalled, and, putting her hand up to her delicate throat, she could feel the soreness resulting from the terrible grip that had so nearly been her death. But a new danger now threatened her, for she could see that Frank Winthrop was slowly approaching her, though still regarding her with that same questioning, puzzled glance.

Her resolution was quickly taken. She would not appear to know him—she would not respond to his recognition. Yet he might speak of some things which she wished no third party to hear, and she must manage to get rid of the girl who had been so kind and helpful to her before he should speak the name which she felt very sure he would utter in another moment.

Turning quickly to her, she asked, in her sweet, gracious way, if she would kindly find a carriage for her, as she wished to go home and did not feel able to walk. The tender-hearted girl smilingly responded in the affirmative, and was off like a deer to execute her commission, while Gertrude turned a surprised, inquiring look upon the advancing gentleman.

"Pardon me," he said in English, and, lifting his hat, while he searched her lovely face with strange eagerness, "but am I not addressing Miss Gertrude Livingstone?"

Gertrude drew herself up slightly, and, without betraying the slightest sign that she knew him, replied, in purest French, that—

"Monsieur l'American evidently imagined her to be a countrywoman of his own."

She then thanked him briefly but gratefully for the great kindness that he had done her.

"It was but a deed of humanity," he gravely returned in French, but his eyes lighted, for, despite her attempt to change her tone, he thought he recognized a familiar cadence in it.

"I am none the less grateful, monsieur," she answered, somewhat coldly, and then signified, by a slight wave of her hand that she desired him to pass on and leave her alone.

But during the short time that Frank Winthroe had known Gertrude he had become enthralled by her beauty and loveliness of character. Time and again he had been tempted to write to her; time and again he had resolved to go to Livingstone Elms and strive to win her; but his courage had never been sufficient to enable him to carry out his desire.

He felt quite sure, however, that he had found her now, and he had no intention of being dismissed in such an unceremonious manner; he determined to assure himself whether it was Gertrude Livingstone whom he had rescued from a fearful fate or not.

"Miss Livingstone," he persisted earnestly and in an appealing tone, "you cannot suppose that the comparatively short time that has elapsed since you and I last met has changed you or blunted my memory to such an extent that I could mistake a stranger for you! Even the tones of your voice are too familiar for that, notwithstanding you have attempted to disguise them. I *know* that you are Gertrude Livingstone, and my cousin's—Rose Taylor—most valued friend. I repeat, I know you, even though report said you were drowned only a few months ago, and in spite of your evident repugnance to being recognized."

For a moment Gertrude was both embarrassed and distressed; then a certain sense of the ludicrous superseded those feelings, and a smile, half bitter, half amused, crept over her face, as she said:

"You compel me to confess my identity Mr. Win-

thrope, although for certain reasons I did desire to remain incognito. Pardon my little subterfuge, and let me assure you that it is a real pleasure to look into a friendly face."

His eyes lighted joyously; he clasped her hand eagerly, and exclaimed in English:

"Then it was a false report, that of your being drowned?"

"That is a self-evident fact, since I am here *in propria persona*," she answered, smiling.

"But there must have been some foundation for the story, for I know that Rose has been heartbroken over your supposed tragic fate."

She changed the subject by telling him that she had recently met Rose, and also that they had passed many pleasant hours together during her stay in the city.

He seemed surprised, but glad that his pretty cousin's heart had been relieved of its burden of sorrow. They had a very pleasant chat, and Gertrude was really comforted by the sight of another familiar face, particularly so after the frightful experience which she had undergone that afternoon.

The pretty French maid now approached, saying that a carriage awaited mademoiselle at the entrance to the avenue. Gertrude arose, and Mr. Winthrop conducted her to her carriage, obtained her address, which he communicated to the driver, then lifted his hat, and watched her drive away with a look of mingled hope and longing in his handsome eyes that would have both pained and startled the beautiful girl if she had seen it.

The next day Mr. Winthrop had secured lodgings in the same street with and nearly opposite the Overtons, with the intention of seeing as much as possible of his lovely countrywoman while he remained in Paris. A few days later, in his wanderings, he came suddenly upon Gertrude and her young charges in the Louvre.

He stood watching them for a while, longing to join them, yet hesitating to intrude, and it was while thus

engaged that he was greatly surprised and mystified by hearing the little girls address Gertrude as "Miss Richards."

She had not told him, when he had previously encountered her, that she was living under an assumed name. She might not have deemed it necessary—she might not have thought of it.

"There is some inexplicable mystery here," he said to himself. "How strangely she acted the other day! She did not mean to be recognized, but made the best of it when she saw there was no help for it, and I find her answering to an assumed name. I'd almost wager my diamond studs that she is hiding from her friends, though why is beyond my comprehension. She may have drifted out to sea, as she said, but it certainly looks as if she had purposely allowed her relatives to believe that she was lost, and is now employed by some family as a governess."

Mr. Winthrope was reasoning far better than he knew, but he was very curious to ascertain the truth, and he resolved he would know, if possible, before very long, and if the lovely girl was in any trouble he would constitute himself her champion if she would allow it. With this resolution formed he advanced toward the group he had been so attentively regarding, and, doffing his hat respectfully to Gertrude, he said, slightly emphasizing the name he had just overheard:

"Good afternoon, Miss Richards. This is truly an unexpected pleasure."

Gertrude colored at his manner of addressing her, and lifted her eyes to his face with a startled look. He smiled wisely, and then glanced at the children. She looked grateful for his thoughtfulness and responded heartily:

"Good afternoon, Mr. Winthrope; you, also, are doing the Louvre, it seems."

"Yes; and will you take pity on a stranger and allow him to join your party?" he asked, with an air of entreaty which she had not the heart to resist.

"If you desire," she answered; then added, with a



glance at her youthful companions, "These are my little pupils, Beth and Florence Overton."

The little girls, though surprised that their teacher knew the stranger, were instantly attracted by his kind face and gracious manner, and were ready to make friends with him on the spot.

They all spent a most delightful afternoon, Mr. Winthrope so improving his opportunity and making himself so agreeable that Gertrude gave herself up to the pleasure of the hour, and felt that it was very restful to be thus kindly attended and cared for.

It was a common occurrence after that for Mr. Winthrope to meet them upon their rambles or drives, or when they were sight-seeing, and they really began to look upon him as a sort of escort and protector. Gertrude grew to regard him as a valued friend, and it was not long before he had drawn from her the confession that she was hiding from her friends.

But he was sure she had not told him all. He saw that there was some hidden sorrow in her life, and he longed to ask her what it was and comfort her in some way; but he was too manly to question her further, while he was greatly gratified at having been taken into her confidence ever so little.

When Mr. and Mrs. Overton returned she no longer hesitated about presenting him to them, nor demurred when he pleaded for the privilege of calling upon her. Consequently he became almost a daily visitor, and the Overtons were not long in discovering, though Gertrude still seemed blind to the fact, that their handsome countryman entertained serious designs upon their accomplished governess.

But letters from home had come to Mrs. Overton during her absence, and these contained startling intelligence, at least for Gertrude. Miss Van Ausdel wrote, among many other items of gossip, that young Doctor Livingstone had suddenly thrown up his practice in Chicago and gone abroad again upon important business.

"It is the strangest thing in the world," she wrote.

"He must have had some sudden trouble, whether pecuniary or otherwise I do not know; but he looked as if he had been sick a month when he called to tell me he must go and to bid me good-by. It is the greatest pity, for he was beginning to be very popular here as a physician, as well as in society."

Gertrude felt as if her heart must break when Mrs. Overton read this aloud to her husband in her hearing.

She knew at once that Mr. Livingstone must have sent Allan her letter and that his "business" abroad was to search for her—to try to persuade her to return and assume her place as his wife. She knew well enough from the fact of his having started immediately that his pride rebelled at the idea of a divorce as she had suggested—that he would never subject himself or her to the scandal which such a proceeding would be sure to create.

She was very wretched, almost ill, for a few days, over this news, while at first she was exceedingly nervous at the thought of Allan's coming. She did not mean that he should find her, however; she would run no risk, and she resolved to watch the list of arrivals in the different papers, and to leave Paris herself the moment she learned of his coming.

She was therefore deeply thankful when, close upon the letter already mentioned, there followed another from Blanch stating that Mrs. Van Ausdel had been taken suddenly and dangerously ill, and that there were but faint hopes of her recovery, and begging her sister to come home.

The Overtons decided they must return immediately, and when Mrs. Overton begged Gertrude to go with them and still retain her position in the family, the anxious girl was only too eager to accept the proposition.

To Frank Winthrop, however, this sudden flitting was a great blow. He, too, turned white, and looked as if he had been ill for a month when informed that they "would leave Paris for America the day after to-morrow."

"I cannot be reconciled to this unexpected move, Miss Livingstone," he said, looking very soberly into her face after the announcement. He always addressed her by

her own name when they were alone, and this conversation occurred on the evening before her departure.

Gertrude smiled.

"It is rather sudden," she answered, "and I must tell you, Mr. Winthrope, that you have helped to make the last few weeks very pleasant to me."

"Have I? You are kind to tell me that," he said, his face lighting, "and may I hope you will welcome me with pleasure when I return to America?"

"Indeed you may, if we should meet. I should be very ungrateful not to meet you kindly."

"Miss Livingstone—Gertrude," he broke forth suddenly, "may I not hope for something more than the welcome of a mere friend?"

Gertrude looked up startled, dismayed; and, meeting his eager glance, knew that he was going to lay his heart at her feet.

Her face grew white and distressed, and she half arose from her seat beside him with a gesture of entreaty to him not to go on.

But he caught her hand and gently reseated her.

"You know I love you, Gertrude," he began, but she interrupted him in great agitation.

"No, no; you must not say that to me," she cried.

"Of course I must. Do you think I could let you go without telling you? I think I must have begun to love you more than a year ago, when I first met you at school; but I have not fully realized the fact until now, having found you here, a gloriously beautiful woman, and having been permitted to enjoy so much of your society. My heart has never yielded homage to woman before, but you have conquered it, and—I have dared to hope that you would reciprocate my affection."

"I cannot—I do not—oh, I am sorry that you have said this to me," Gertrude said, with quivering lips and heaving chest.

"I will teach you to love me, dear," Frank Winthrope said gently, and fearing he had spoken too abruptly.

"Oh, you cannot."

"Cannot! Are you very sure, Gertrude?"

"Very sure."

"Only one thing would convince me of that, and that would be to know that—you love some one else," he returned gravely, but looking very white about the mouth.

There was an awkward pause, then Gertrude said, in a low, scarcely audible tone:

"I do."

The young man at her side started as if a knife had pierced him.

"That is the secret of your hiding, then," he said impulsively, while he regarded her with anxious, sorrowful eyes.

"Partly," she admitted, a vivid crimson rushing to her brow.

"There must be something wrong in this, Gertrude," he returned, after a moment. "He whom you love cannot be worthy of you, or there would be no need to hide from him; and, if that is so, I believe—forgive me if I seem presuming, but I love you so—I should be justified in using all my art to win you from him."

Gertrude turned and lifted her wonderful gray eyes to his face with a look that he never forgot.

"Mr. Winthrope, you compel me to confess to you what I never meant to confess to any one while I lived—I am already a wife."

For a moment Frank Winthrope sat gazing in blank amazement into Gertrude's beautiful face, while his own grew very white at this startling assertion.

"I am very sorry if I have unconsciously misled you, and brought sorrow to you. It—it never occurred to me that you could learn to care for me, except as a friend," Gertrude said.

"Do not be troubled about me. I do not blame you. It was all my own fault. Pray forgive me for paining you with an avowal which, under the circumstances, must have been very obnoxious; and if ever you find yourself in need of help in any form, I beg you will consider me a friend to be relied upon."

He spoke disjointedly and with evident pain, and Gertrude was moved almost to tears as she realized how keenly he had been wounded.

"You are very kind. I know of no one whom I would trust more fully," she said.

Then, rising, and holding out her hand to him, she continued:

"We go to-morrow, as you know, so I will say good-bye to you now. You will go to Rome soon, and you may tell Rose confidentially that you have seen me, and give my tender love to her."

That was all; and, with a lingering pressure of her hand, Frank Winthrope turned away from the only woman whom he had ever loved, feeling as if life had suddenly lost its charm—the world its beauty.

The next day the Overtons were on their way back to London. They reached the city late in the evening, spent the night at the Midland Grand Hotel, where they could take the early train for Glasgow, whence, on the afternoon of the next day, they would sail for New York.

In the morning, after the family had breakfast, they were assembled in the waiting room of the hotel, where Mr. Overton looked after the baggage, when Gertrude's eyes were attracted by a large portmanteau upon the floor near her, and bearing upon one end the initials "A. L."

A shock like electricity ran all along her nerves as she saw them, and a second glance showed her the label of a certain steamer, of a line between New York and Liverpool, which told her that the baggage had recently arrived from America.

But a still greater shock awaited her. As she stood with her eyes riveted upon it, instinctively feeling as if something was about to happen, and wondering if A. L. might not stand for Allan Livingstone, a deep, rich-toned voice behind her suddenly said:

"Ah, yes; here it is!" The next moment a tall, grandly formed man passed her—his coat even brushing the folds of her dress and thrilling her with a strange tremor—and pointed out the portmanteau that had attracted her attention to a porter who followed him.

Gertrude knew him instantly; she would have



known him anywhere, even though she had not seen him for long years. It was indeed Allan Livingstone, on his way to seek for the wife who was even then standing in his presence. It was here that they met and passed each other. He gave up his check to the official who accompanied him, and who was about to bear his baggage to a cab that was waiting for him outside, when, as if attracted by some power stronger than his own will, he turned his head and met Gertrude's glance.

Something in those deep, fathomless gray eyes thrilled him through, and he wondered why that queenly, beautiful woman should regard him so fixedly, and why she should look so pale. He never suspected the truth, even though her lips moved and she had almost uttered his name before she could think to check herself.

Gertrude's letter to his father had been written from Paris; so to Paris he was going to look for her, and where he ought to have been long before this, but for the fearful storm that had threatened him with shipwreck and driven the steamer on which he had sailed far out of her course, and caused her to put into a strange port for repairs.

Gertrude afterward wondered what kept her from swooning at his feet, for it seemed as if all her strength, even her senses, had forsaken her, when she suddenly became conscious that Mr. Overton had approached and was addressing her.

"We are all ready, Miss Richards," he began; then, remarking her unusual pallor, he added: "I fear yesterday's journey tired you out; you are as white as a ghost."

"No, indeed; I rested nicely last night, and I am all right," she said, recovering her self-possession and looking up at him with the most luminous smile Allan Livingstone thought he had ever seen, and then she followed Mr. Overton with a queenly air from the place; but her heart was like lead in her bosom as she turned away from her husband.

The passage was a very rough one, and the Overton

party were all thankful enough when they landed in New York. Mrs. Overton would not allow herself any rest, although she was weak and worn with the voyage; but insisted upon taking the first express for the West, for she was terribly anxious for news of her mother.

They arrived in Chicago an almost exhausted party, but found Mrs. Van Ausdel alive, and with some prospect that she might rally, if nothing new occurred to aggravate her disease. It was a stricken household, however, for several weeks, for the invalid's life apparently hung by a brittle thread, though she began to mend slightly soon after her daughter's return. Mrs. Overton and Blanch devoted themselves to their mother, while Gertrude took the entire charge of Beth and Florence, who grew more fond of her than ever during this time of sickness and trial. But the dark and threatening cloud passed. Mrs. Van Ausdel grew slowly better. Doctor Fosdick finally pronounced her out of danger, and the household gradually drifted back into its accustomed ways, and life assumed a more cheerful aspect for them all.

Then Gertrude was thrown more into the society of Blanch Van Ausdel, and found herself studying the lovely girl with deep interest, and weighing her character by her own high moral standard. It seemed strange that these two women should have been thrown together thus. Blanch was drawn to Gertrude at once, and treated her in the most friendly manner—recognizing immediately her superiority to the position that she occupied, and realizing that she was as well fitted to shine in society as herself.

But Gertrude began to feel uncomfortable after a time. Knowing that she was playing a part, and being in possession of Blanch's secret—for she was not long in discovering how completely she had surrendered her heart to Allan—she felt almost like a spy in the family, and determined to make some change in her mode of living.

The opportunity which she desired was not long in coming to her, although it did not result quite as she had expected.

A friend of Mrs. Overton, being suddenly reduced to the necessity of earning her own livelihood, opened a select private school for young misses, and solicited Beth and Florence as pupils. Mrs. Overton at first demurred, feeling, since she had persuaded Gertrude to return to America with her, that it would be hardly honorable to remove Beth and Florence from her care, and thus deprive her of employment.

But when Gertrude knew of it, she begged Mrs. Overton to send the girls to school, and urged that the change, if she would be satisfied to make it, would enable her to carry out a project of her own—that of opening a studio for pupils in painting.

“Oh, that will be just the thing for you!” Mrs. Overton exclaimed eagerly. “You ought not to hide your talents any longer. You are much too accomplished to plod on as a governess, and I will use all my influence to obtain pupils for you.”

But when she spoke of finding another home for herself, not one of the family would hear a word about it, and Mrs. Overton and the children were so aggrieved at the suggestion that she had not the heart to persist in it.

Mrs. Overton secured for her a pleasant room in a good locality, and Gertrude began her career as an artist at once, with as many pupils as she desired, but resolved to paint a picture or two for the fall exposition, which would be held in October.

She told no one of her plans for the exposition; she did not wish any one to know that she contemplated having a picture there; but through long weeks she worked early and late, living over the past and painting from memory.

Nothing had been heard from Allan; even Doctor Fosdick knew nothing of his movements, and he began to feel as if his young friend was treating him rather shabbily, to thus ignore his friendship and interest.

Blanch Van Ausdel had ceased to mention even his name; but Gertrude, who had grown to know her well, had reason to believe that her heart was anxiously longing for some tidings from him.

She had not been quite well during the summer; had lost color and vitality; was languid and depressed. She said it was the "heat." But Gertrude felt sure that it was the inward fire that was consuming her.

September came, and the Overtons returned.

Our young artist's picture was finished, and had been sent to the exposition, which was advertised to be upon a larger and grander scale than ever before, and she waited with no small degree of interest, not to say of impatience, to see where it would be hung, and learn what verdict would be pronounced upon it.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### A FLIGHT AND A PURSUIT.

It is necessary for us to go back to Allan for a while. We know how he followed the Websters from Brussels to Havre, fully believing that he was at last on the track of his long-looked-for wife. He had become so wearied and disheartened during his unsuccessful search that his mind, in its depressed state, eagerly seized upon anything that happened to point to a realization of his hopes and thus, as he journeyed toward Havre in the wake of the Websters, he grew more and more confident that his long waiting and suspense were almost at an end.

Arriving at his destination, he proceeded directly to the office of the steamship line, where he intended booking himself for the passage across the Channel.

He was waiting for his turn to procure his ticket, when, chancing to glance out of the door, he saw Mr. Webster himself in the act of entering. But the moment he caught sight of Allan, he started, looked greatly disturbed, then turned, and disappeared as quickly as he had come.

Allan followed him instantly, and as he left the office, saw him turn a corner and disappear down a street running at right angles with the one he was on.

He hastened after him, but upon his turning the same corner, Mr. Webster was nowhere in sight. Still he kept on, and soon came opposite a hotel of very quiet but respectable appearance.

He entered, and going to the office, looked over the list of recent arrivals. He found the names he was looking for, and immediately entered him own, and called for a room.

He resolved to wait until after dinner before taking any decisive steps; then he determined to seek an interview with Mr. Webster, proclaim his identity—although he began to suspect, from his having been so disconcerted upon seeing him, that he had been already recognized—and have his relations with Gertrude decisively settled.

He was purposely late at dinner, and watched with some eagerness while the guests filed in and seated themselves. He was sure that he saw the Websters glance about with some anxiety as they passed to their places at table, and he felt a thrill of exultation when, as he took his seat nearly opposite them, but at another board, he remarked the startled glance which Miss Webster shot at him from beneath her long lashes, while an unmistakable pallor spread over her beautiful face.

The bill of fare was a long one, but the Websters left the dining room at last, and Allan went out upon a little balcony to smoke a cigar, and to calm his nerves before seeking Mr. Webster.

It was almost dark, and he had not been there long when a slight commotion in the street beneath him attracted his attention. He bent over the railing and looked below just in season to see Mr. and Mrs. Webster enter a carriage and drive away from the hotel.

He rushed below, waylaid the porter who attended them, and dropping a gold coin into his willing palm, asked whither the departing guests had gone.

He was told that their trunks had been marked Paris, and they had gone to the station to catch the nine-o'clock express for that city.

Allan dashed up to the clerk's office, paid his bill,



called another carriage, and was also driven to the station to follow them. He had only just time to purchase his ticket and leap upon the train before it began to move, and then he, too, was on his way back to Paris.

On reaching Paris, he managed to ascertain where the Websters were going, but while he was negotiating for a carriage to follow them, Mr. Webster espied him, and changing the command he had just given his driver, the party went in an opposite direction, and succeeded in evading their pursuer for the time.

It is needless, however, to rehearse how Allan kept up his pursuit during the next two months; how he learned of their leaving Paris for Strasburg, Germany; from Strasburg, going to Basle, thence to Lyons, back again to Paris, and finally, after losing sight of them for a fortnight, tracking them to Calais.

He kept himself well out of sight, however, until he saw the party board the steamer at Calais; then he slipped into the cabin, and waited his time.

He could not help feeling amused, however, in spite of the pitch to which he had worked himself over his stern chase, which had, indeed, been a long one, when, after the vessel was well under way, he saw the start of affright and the look of helpless terror with which Mr. Webster regarded him, as he coolly mounted to the deck and placed himself in his path.

But he quickly recovered himself and rather turned the tables, by assuming an offensive rather than a defensive attitude.

"Well, young man," he began, with a shrewd glance into Allan's face, "it seems to me you and I turn up pretty often in one another's paths; suppose you introduce yourself and let us be better acquainted? My name is Webster."

"Thank you, sir," responded Allan affably, yet coloring at having matters taken thus summarily out of his hands.

He handed the gentleman his card and watched him closely while he read his name.

"Allan Livingstone, M. D.," he read under his breath.

"It's a good-sounding name, and you're an M. D.—medicine is your profession, and you're from Chicago?"

"Yes, sir."

The old gentleman looked incredulous, also slightly quizzical.

"Um—well, then, young man, I'd like to ask you a direct question."

"A dozen if you like, sir."

"Thank you; I think I can make myself understood with less trouble than that," was the dry retort. "But to the point. Why on earth are you tracking me and my family about from pillar to post?"

Allan looked a little disconcerted.

"Ahem! Well, sir, I shall be very glad to explain my movements to you—indeed, I was intending to do so—but first I would like to put a query or two to you," he said.

"Well, well, what is it?" demanded Mr. Webster, somewhat testily.

"I wish to ask if the young lady who is traveling with you is your daughter?"

"No, she is not." This rather defiantly.

"Is she an unmarried lady?"

"No, she is not."

"Is she not hiding from her husband?"

"Yes, she is. What of it?" but the man grew very pale at this question, though he was defiant still.

"Her name is not Webster at all—she is traveling under an assumed name?" Allan next asserted.

The man's face cleared. He drew a breath of relief.

"Well, now, you needn't be too sure of that," he retorted; "and I reckon you're not the man I've taken you for, all along, or you'd never have made that last assertion."

"How so?" demanded Allan, surprised.

"Because if you'd been sent here by Tom to look us up, you'd have known that the 'Webster' was all right, though it mightn't be the whole of it."

"Tom! Sent here to look you up! I don't think I

understand you at all," and the young physician looked decidedly mystified.

Mr. Webster became very red in the face and then burst into a rollicking laugh.

"Well, young man, this is the rarest game of hide-and-seek it was ever my lot to know anything about," he said, recovering his dignity after a moment. "You have kept us pretty well on our mettle for the last two months, and we have given you a fine race over the country, and all for nothing, I'll be bound. But to be serious, sir, I reckon you and I both have been laboring under a slight mistake; and now, if you want to tell me what your object really is, I think we can settle this mystery without much more ado."

Allan led the way to a sheltered seat where they could converse undisturbed, and told what he thought needful of his story, his wife's disappearance, her letter, and his impulsive resolution to search for her even in the face of impossibilities. He told of his attraction toward Miss Webster because of a fancied resemblance to his mother's description of his wife. Her form, complexion, hair, eyes, were like hers; she sang beautifully; her name was Gertrude, and in fact seemed just like what he expected to find his wife in person.

Mr. Webster was deeply interested in the story, and earnestly sympathized with the narrator.

"Well, my friend," he said, when Allan concluded, "you have explained yourself very satisfactorily, and you have related an exceedingly interesting romance. I hope you may yet succeed in your search, but you will have to go in another direction, for you were never more mistaken about anything than to suppose our Gertrude is the woman whom you seek. To prove it, I will tell you her story, which comes pretty near being as thrilling as your own.

"I have a scapegrace nephew at home, who was named for me—by the way, this is a Chicago story, too—and I intended to make the fellow my heir until I found out how wicked he was. He fell in love with this girl's pretty face and high-bred ways, and pretended that he

wanted to marry her. Her name was Gertrude Fairmount; she was an orphan, and poor—tended behind a counter for a living. We found out about it, and that he was going to deceive her. We got acquainted with her, liked her, and thinking perhaps a good and loving wife might be the saving of Tom, we fixed it so that what he intended should be a farce was a good square knot, safely tied by our own minister. But it seems the boy had got his eye on another—a rich but dreadfully plain-looking girl—and he was furious when he found out how he had been caught in his own net.

“He went off in a fit of sulks, and did not come back for three months. But I just settled a handsome fortune on his wife, and fixed it so that nobody could touch a penny of it without her consent. She blossomed out like a daisy, though she deeply grieved at first over the deception that had been practiced upon her. Tom had nothing, and after a time came back, promising to reform, but it was only to gain his own ends. He imagined he could make the girl fork over her cash. He demanded the control of her money as his right, since he imagined it belonged to him on account of the ties of kinship. But he found that his beautiful wife had plenty of spirit, and though he first coaxed and wheedled, then abused her most shamefully, he could not move her. She said she would share with him, but she should control every dollar of her income. But this made him desperate, and he threatened all sorts of things until she refused to have anything more to do with him.

“When she found that we were coming abroad, she begged us to manage so that she could come with us without Tom’s knowledge, for she could not stand his abuse any longer. We had grown very fond of her, and thought we would like to have young company, while it might bring Tom to his senses to be left to himself; so we agreed. We started a month ahead of her, and planned to wait in Liverpool until she should join us. She watched her opportunity, and when Tom left the city on one of his prolonged sprees, she quietly disap-

peared and came to us. We have been traveling a year and a half, and have grown to love the girl as if she really belonged to us. She was terribly upset, though, when you put in an appearance at Brussels, and began to watch her so closely. She was sure you were a detective, sent by Tom to ferret her out, so that he could swoop down upon her and get money from her, which, of course, meant more abuse and misery for her; and I began to think so myself when you followed us so closely.

"I feared even worse—that some harm was intended the girl. I have never registered my whole name—which is Thomas Webster Benthall—because I felt that Tom would be less likely to find us. He might not think of us as Websters, even if he should see the name; and yet I knew if he had sent a detective on our track he would have been told too much about us, if he had already spotted us, to ask the question you did about its being an assumed name. So that query put me at my ease at once, and convinced me that you had made a mistake in your reckoning, whoever you might be.

"There," concluded Mr. Webster Benthall, "you have the pith of our story; and now, if you are agreeable, I'd like to have my wife and Gertrude up and introduce them to you, and set their fluttering hearts at rest regarding being pursued by a detective."

The ladies were glad to come and be introduced to Doctor Livingstone, after learning all the circumstances of his hunting them so persistently. Young Mrs. Benthall received his apology very sweetly; assured him that she was very glad to make his acquaintance; also of her sympathy for his own trouble, and her interest in the young wife whom he imagined she resembled.

The remainder of the journey across the Channel and up to London was passed very pleasantly; and though Allan was still as much in the dark as ever regarding his own Gertrude, he was greatly relieved that it was not his wife whom he had been so hotly pursuing, and who had been so persistently fleeing from him.



So, after a week spent very pleasantly with his new acquaintances in London, he bade them farewell, started for Liverpool the thirteenth of September, whence on the twenty-first he sailed for New York.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### GERTRUDE'S PICTURE

Gertrude had sent her picture to the exposition anonymously. No one, save the chairman of the art committee, knew the name of the artist, and he was pledged to secrecy. The long-looked-for opening day came at last, and, lo! when, during the afternoon, her curiosity could not be restrained, and she went to ascertain the fate of her picture, she found it occupying a conspicuous position, in a fine light among other gems, and knew that it was a success.

It was catalogued "That Dowdy," and truly it was an original and striking picture. It represented an alcove in some large building, in which there was a collection of rare and beautiful flowers and plants. In the foreground there stood a youth and maiden, the former a handsome, manly fellow, with a bright dark eye, a fine head, a proud carriage, and an unmistakable air of good breeding about him.

In striking contrast to him, the young girl was remarkably plain and awkward. Her red hair was carelessly arranged—if it could be said to be arranged at all; her face was deeply freckled, though the features were good, and she had fine, large blue-gray eyes, which were about the only redeeming points about her, unless we except the honesty and purity of her expression, which somehow appealed to the heart in spite of her plainness. Her form was bad, her attitude exceedingly ungraceful, while her dress was unbecoming and even untidy.

The young couple had evidently been examining some elegant Maréchal Niel roses, for the girl's hand was lovingly caressing some of their rich leaves, though her

face, uplifted to her companion, had a half-startled half-pained expression upon it. The youth, though he seemed to be listening to her, was glancing over her shoulder at a couple of stylish-looking girls in the background, one of whom appeared to be pointing at the maiden we have just described, and to be making some slighting remark about her to her friend. There was an angry flash in his eye, a haughty air in his uplifted head, and a scornful curl about his handsome mouth, as if he resented the remark he had just overheard.

The face was the boyish face of Allan Livingstone, and that of the girl Gertrude Wynn, as she was at the age of fourteen; and both were true to life. Every one who looked upon the picture instinctively felt as if there must be a history connected with it. Something of it, of course, could easily be read in the attitude and expression of the different personages, but much more seemed to be implied in a nameless something which pervaded those two faces in the foreground.

Crowds gathered before it every day; were thrilled by it; speculated about it, and then went away to talk about it, and make others anxious to see it.

"It is the queerest picture I ever saw, and yet every time I look at it, I am more and more attracted by it," Mrs. Overton remarked, at the dinner table one day, after having paid a visit to the exposition, and "got the craze," as her sister expressed it.

"Have you seen it, Helen?" she asked, turning to Gertrude.

"To which one do you refer?" she asked, knowing well enough, yet not wishing to appear to know too much.

"To the one catalogued 'That Dowdy.'"

"Oh, yes; I have seen it."

"Don't you believe it has a history?"

"I presume so—most pictures have," Gertrude observed quietly.

"Well, but I imagine there is a romance in it. What is your opinion of it as a work of art?"

"I should not presume to pass judgment upon it. I can only say that it is a very interesting picture to me."

Gertrude answered, with a slight flush on her creamy cheek.

"I think the faces must be portraits," Blanch remarked, "and, truly, the face of that boy seems strangely familiar. I have been trying to think all the afternoon whom he resembles."

Gertrude's heart beat fast at this. How easily she could have told her who the picture looked like.

"Mamma, I think that girl is the prettiest homely girl I ever saw. I loved her at once," said little Beth, with a grave emphasis that showed her sincerity.

This remark was greeted with a burst of laughter from the little lady's papa, mamma, and auntie; but Gertrude longed to take the child into her arms and hug her to her heart, for her earnest sympathy with the "dowdy" of the picture.

A week later the Overtons and Gertrude paid another visit to the exposition. They wandered for two or three hours through the different departments, taking notice of many things which had not before attracted their attention.

At last Miss Van Ausdel remarked:

"Grace, I am tired and want to go home; but let us have one more look at our picture first—we always find something new in it, and I never weary of it."

"Very well," returned Mrs. Overton. "I should enjoy another look at it myself; will you come, Helen?"

"Yes, of course, if you wish," Gertrude assented, thinking that Miss Van Ausdel had unconsciously paid her the highest compliment she could receive; and then they all turned their steps toward the art department.

Blanch led the way, but just as she reached the threshold she stopped short and uttered a low cry, while every particle of color forsook her face.

"What is the matter, Blanch?" cried her sister, regarding her with some alarm.

"Look! is not that Doctor Livingston just inside the door?" said Miss Van Ausdel, indicating a gentleman who was standing near, but with his back toward them.

"I cannot say, Blanch; surely you must remember that I have never met Doctor Livingstone," replied her sister.

"It is he—I am sure," and now Blanch Van Ausdel's face lighted with an inward joy, her color all came back, and her lips were wreathed with smiles.

But Gertrude felt as if the floor were slipping from beneath her, for one swift glance told her that it was indeed Allan—she would recognize that form and the proud poise of that noble head anywhere. But how could she meet him—face to face—and preserve her calmness? She knew she must meet him—there was no help for it, for, of course, Blanch would greet him and then desire to present them to her sister and herself.

She would gladly have slipped away and spared herself the trying ordeal, but she knew that she could not without attracting attention and remark, and so she braced herself for the coming trial with what fortitude she could.

Blanch advanced to the returned wanderer, her beautiful face glowing with a light such as no one had seen there for many months, and, extending her faultlessly gloved hand, said:

"Doctor Livingstone, welcome home."

He turned quickly, and a flash of pleasure suffused his own face.

"Ah! Miss Van Ausdel! this is an unexpected meeting. Thank you for your hearty welcome, and let me assure you that a friendly face is a pleasant sight, after so long an absence," he returned, warmly clasping the hand she had proffered him.

"When did you arrive?" Blanch queried, a lovely flush in her cheeks.

"I arrived in New York a week ago, but did not return to Chicago until last night."

"I trust you have had a pleasant and successful trip," Blanch continued, with a wistful, half-timid glance into his face, which was not in keeping with her usual calm assurance and self-possession.

His face clouded instantly, and she saw that it was a question that would not bear discussion, and with wonderful tact, she hastened to add, as if she had not expected a reply:

"Let me introduce you to my sister, who was abroad when you left us—Mrs. Overton, Doctor Livingstone."

Allan lifted his hat and bowed, but Mrs. Overton cordially extended her hand and expressed her pleasure at meeting one whom she had heard so highly commended by their mutual friend, Doctor Fosdick.

And then she turned to Gertrude, saying:

"Allow me to present a dear friend—Miss Richards, Doctor Livingstone."

As Allan's eyes fell upon her face he started.

He remembered her instantly; remembered, too, when and where he had seen her. He knew that she was the same beautiful woman whom he had seen in the waiting room of the Midland Grand Hotel in London.

Gertrude bowed with averted eyes, simply murmuring his name, as she acknowledged the introduction, and Allan immediately judged her as "cold and reserved," though wondrously lovely to look upon.

"We were just coming to look at a remakarble picture which is the talk of all Chicago," Blanch resumed, when these ceremonies were over. "Will you come with us and pass your judgment upon it?"

"Certainly, I shall be very glad to accompany you."

A moment later they stopped before the picture, and Blanch said:

"This is the wonderful picture, Doctor Livingstone. What do you think of it?"

Gertrude watched him as he lifted his head to look.

At first his expression was simply one of expectation and interest; but, as he began to comprehend the nature of the painting, and as that well-remembered scene, with its familiar faces, met his eyes, it changed to one of blank astonishment. Then a sudden pallor swept over his face, his eyes grew almost fierce with the look of pain that leaped into them, and his lips quivered with suppressed emotion.

"Ah!" he ejaculated, in a tone that Gertrude never forgot; then, with wonderful self-restraint, he added, "It is a striking picture, Miss Van Ausdel. What is



it called?" and he began hurriedly turning the leaves of his catalogue to hide his agitation.

"It is designated as 'That Dowdy.' A very original and peculiar title, is it not? And yet the picture tells its own story. One can readily see that one of those stylish girls in the background has just applied the term to this plain-looking maiden—that she has caught the phrase, and is wounded by it, while her handsome, manly companion resents the insult with well-merited scorn."

A burning crimson had shot up over Allan Livingstone's cheek to his brow, as Blanch pronounced those familiar words, and then Gertrude saw his lips suddenly compressed with pain beneath his silken mustache.

"Who is the artist?" he asked, in a tone that was a trifle unsteady, after appearing to study the picture for a few moments.

"The artist is unknown; he or she was evidently either afraid or too modest to allow the name to appear. But, doctor, you have not yet given your opinion of the picture."

"It is unique, original, and shows talent, to say the very least," Allan replied, his eyes riveted upon the face of the girl who had been the companion of his boyhood's years.

"I think her eyes are something wonderful," Blanch continued; "they are such full, liquid, gray orbs; and really! I have never observed it before, but they are very like yours, Miss Richards."

Of course they all turned upon Gertrude at this, and for a moment she thought she must betray herself. It was very hard to preserve her composure.

"Miss Van Ausdel has spoken truly. The eyes are very like yours, Miss Richards," Allan observed gravely, while he searched her face critically.

She summoned all her will to her aid. She turned her glance full upon him, and replied with an air of indifference:

"Simply because they happen to be the same color, I presume."

"I wish we could find out who the artist is. I believe there is a pretty romance embodied in this painting," Mrs. Overton observed.

"Ay! a romance, indeed," said Allan to himself; "and there is but one person in the world who could have painted the picture—that is Gertrude herself."

The party passed on to look at something else, but he resolved that he would learn more about the painting forthwith. He interviewed the chairman on art the next day, but was informed that the artist desired both name and address to be withheld from the public.

A few days later, when Mr. Overton came home to dinner, he remarked smilingly to Blanch:

"Well, my fair sister, I have some news for you. Your wonderful picture, 'That Dowdy,' is sold."

"Who is the purchaser?" Blanch asked, looking deeply interested, while Gertrude scarcely breathed as she waited for Mr. Overton's reply.

"Guess."

"I am sure I cannot; I know of no one who has wanted it."

"Well, read that, then, and be enlightened;" and Mr. Overton passed her a paper, indicating a paragraph for her perusal.

Blanch read aloud:

"We are happy to announce that the young and skillful Doctor Livingstone has returned from his European tour, and will immediately resume his connection with our venerable and esteemed Doctor Fosdick. We give him cordial greeting and wish him success. It is also stated upon reliable authority that he has become the purchaser of of the striking picture which has recently attracted so much attention at the exposition; we refer to the one catalogued as 'The Dowdy.'"

Gertrude listened to the reading of the paragraph with strange emotions. Allan Livingstone had purchased her picture? What could it mean? She felt sure of one thing, and that was, he suspected she was the artist. She believed he had bought it because he imagined he would

be brought in contact with her in negotiating for it. But she had taken care of that.

Various thoughts passed through her mind as she listened to Blanch reading, and to the talk afterward as to the reason of Allan's purchase.

"I should really like to know what Doctor Livingstone gave for that picture," Mr. Overton remarked; then asked: "What is your estimate of its value, Helen?"

Gertrude started, and a wave of rich color swept over her face.

"Why do you appeal to me?" she asked lightly, and striving to hide her embarrassment. "You forget that I am a very young artist and not as capable of judging of the worth of such things as one more experienced."

"You are more capable than you appear to think, my dear; if either of my daughters is ever able to paint as well as you do, I shall be very proud of her."

"Thanks; but I am afraid there are very few who would judge as kindly of my work as you do, my friend," Gertrude returned feelingly.

But a new train of thought had been started in her mind by this question which she had evaded so cleverly; and she thought with dismay of the large sum of money which she would have to receive from her own husband for the picture he had purchased.

Five hundred dollars was the price she had put upon it. She had purposely set it high, and more as a matter of form than anything else, for she had had no especial desire to dispose of it, and did not imagine it would be a subject to attract a purchaser. But the thought of taking five hundred dollars from Allan for a picture which could not fail to make him uncomfortable every time he looked at it was appalling.

The following afternoon she was driving in Lincoln Park with Blanch, when they were suddenly joined by Doctor Livingstone, who was mounted upon a magnificent steed. He saluted Miss Van Ausdel with the air of an old friend, then bowed courteously to Gertrude, though his eyes lingered upon her face with a look which plainly indicated that he found it very attractive.

"Do you enjoy horseback exercise, Doctor Livingstone?" Blanch asked, as she glanced admiringly at the beautiful animal he was riding.

"I do very much. Riding and rowing are my favorite sports."

A light shot into Gertrude's eyes. How well she remembered the rides they had taken together over the hills at home, she on her pretty Brown Bess, he on his handsome gray. How well, too, she remembered his love for rowing, and those beautiful hours spent upon the Hudson, when, her own stroke not less sure than his, they had pulled for miles up the stream and then paddled leisurely back, gathering lilies along the shore, or perhaps spending an hour or two fishing in some charming cove. Oh, what happy, happy days they were!

"Do you ever ride, Miss Van Ausdel?" Allan asked, bringing his horse a little nearer to the carriage.

"I am obliged to confess that I am a great coward in the saddle," Blanch answered, laughing, but flushing slightly. "I only enjoy horses when they are controlled by an experienced driver. But Miss Richards is a practiced horsewoman, I have heard my sister say."

"Ah!" and Allan turned to Gertrude with a look of inquiry.

"I am afraid Miss Van Ausdel is unconsciously giving you a false impression, Doctor Livingstone. Mrs. Overton and I rode several times in Rotten Row, London; but one cannot display much of horsemanship under such circumstances; though I used to ride a great deal years ago," Gertrude explained, not without some feeling of embarrassment, however.

"I perceive you are very fond of a good horse, at all events," Allan returned, remarking the affectionate glances she was bestowing upon his spirited animal.

"Indeed I am; and that is a noble creature that you are riding," she replied heartily, and forgetting herself for the moment in her genuine admiration.

"He is, truly—my good Prince Hal!" said the doctor, fondly smoothing his horse's mane.

Gertrude started, and for an instant it seemed as if her bounding heart would suffocate her.

"Prince Hal!"

She looked again, and recognized in the splendid creature a colt that had been raised at Livingstone Elms and given to Allan on his twentieth birthday. It was only two years old at that time, and had been kept most of the time since on a farm belonging to Mr. Livingstone, several miles from The Elms. She had not seen it for more than a year, and it looked very different, nicely groomed, from what it had in its rough coat in the pasture.

She was considerably agitated for a moment, and was very thankful when Blanch changed the conversation.

"Doctor Livingstone, we learn that you have become the owner of 'That Dowdy,'" she said.

"Yes," he answered, but his face clouded instantly, "I took a fancy to have it."

"I suppose, then, that you have discovered and met the artist, and, pardon me, we are very curious regarding the name."

"No, the artist still persists in remaining incog, and my business in connection with the picture was transacted entirely through the art committee."

"How provoking."

"Yes, I was deeply disappointed. I would give very much to meet the individual who painted my picture."

Gertrude's heart grew very light as she listened. He was indeed sincerely regretful not to be able to find her.

"Are you a connoisseur in art, Doctor Livingstone?" Blanch asked.

"I should not presume to claim as much for myself as that," he returned, smiling; "still, I think I know a good picture when I see it."

"You should see some of Miss Richard's pictures. We think she paints finely."

"Ah! Are you an artist?" Allan answered abruptly, and bending a direct, searching glance upon her.



"In a small way," she replied, flushing slightly, yet on her guard. "I have a few pupils, and paint some for my own amusement."

"Oh, Doctor Livingstone," Blanch interrupted, "she is far too modest. A few pupils indeed! She has her hands full, and her pictures are lovely. Go and visit her studio and see for yourself."

"I should be glad to do so. May I have that pleasure, Miss Richards?"

Gertrude's brain whirled at the request.

Could she bear to have him come to her rooms; to be with him alone, and try to entertain him as an ordinary acquaintance—to talk with him for an hour or more, and do nothing to betray her identity?

She was afraid, yet she forced herself to say that "if he desired to see her work she would be happy to show it to him at any time."

They rode side by side for some time longer, and chatted upon different subjects, Miss Van Ausdel growing every moment brighter and more fascinating because of his presence. Then Allan said his time for recreation had expired, and he must return to the city, as he had a patient to see; and, bidding them a smiling adieu, he cast one lingering glance at Gertrude, gave Prince Hal the word, and soon vanished from sight.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### AN EVENING AT THE OPERA.

A few days after, Allan availed himself of the permission he had solicited of Gertrude.

"I was going by, Miss Richards, and I could not resist the desire to come in and look at your pictures," he said, offering her his hand in a cordial way as he entered her studio.

She could not refuse to shake hands with him, but the one she laid in his was icy cold. It was more than five years since they had clasped hands. How well she

remembered that last time! It was in the pretty church at Livingstone, when he had said, "I, Allan, take thee, Gertrude, to be my wedded wife."

But it would not do to think of that now; she must brace herself to do the honors as hostess, and she began to go about her rooms with him, remarking, with a smile:

"I fear you will be disappointed in my collection after Miss Van Ausdel's exaggerated estimate of my work."

An hour slipped by, when, a couple of pupils coming in, Doctor Livingstone thought it was time for him to go.

"May I come again?" he asked, as he turned to leave.

"Certainly, if you think my small collection is worthy of a second visit," Gertrude answered, with shining eyes and the loveliest color in her cheeks.

"Indeed, they are; and—I may wish to order a picture for myself one of these days."

Gertrude smiled as she bowed him out, but, oh! with such a tumult in her heart.

"Oh, Allan, Allan," she murmured, "how can I meet you from time to time, and keep up this deception?"

Three days after this Miss Van Ausdel received a note from Doctor Livingstone, saying he had tickets for the opera for the following evening, asking the pleasure of acting as escort for her and Miss Richards, if they had no other engagement.

"Will you go?" Blanch asked, showing the note to Gertrude, but she spoke coldly, and plainly betrayed that she would have been better pleased if the invitation had not included Miss Richards.

The tone struck painfully upon Gertrude's sensitive heart, and she was tempted to make some excuse and remain at home.

Then she remembered that Patti was to sing, and it had been the wish of years to hear and see that world-renowned songstress; then, too, it would be such a delight to go to the opera with Allan, to sit beside him and feel that she owed her rare pleasure to him.

"Yes, I believe I will," she said. "I cannot resist Patti."

When Allan called for them, he presented Blanch with an exquisite bunch of Maréchal Niel roses, and then turned to Gertrude, saying:

"I knew Miss Van Ausdel's preference, but I was not sure regarding your choice; however," glancing at the roses in her hat, "I am glad to see that I have been fortunate enough not to make any mistake as to color," and he handed her a few very rare long-stemmed pink buds, lovingly nestling among their green leaves.

Blanch had been profuse in her thanks and expressions of pleasure. Gertrude returned him a simple "thank you," but the flush of delight that suffused her face, and the gleam of light that sprang to her eyes, expressed more than a dozen labored sentences could have done.

Gertrude turned her attention to the stage from the first, leaving Blanch to do the agreeable to Doctor Livingstone, an occupation which was by no means an unpleasant one, for she had heard Patti a score of times and could well afford to divide her attention between the stage and her escort.

But Allan found his chief pleasure in watching Gertrude. She sat rapt, absorbed, lost to time and place, until, all at once, when the curtain dropped after a thrilling scene, Allan leaned toward her, and said:

"Miss Richards, I do not believe Patti ever had a more appreciative listener than you have been this evening."

"How can I help being appreciative? I never heard such divine tones before," Gertrude replied, with a little sigh of content, though her eyes were almost black with the excitement which thrilled her.

Allen smiled; then he added:

"Well, while you have been absorbed in the great prima donna, some one opposite, in the first balcony, has been observing you with equal interest."

"Is that so?" Gertrude asked, and glancing up in a startled way.

Could it be possible there was some one present who knew and had recognized her?

"Yes," Allan replied, wondering why she should appear startled. "Lift your glass presently and you will see a lady dressed in black velvet, wearing diamonds, and using a white feather fan. That is the one I refer to, and she has scarcely taken her eyes from your face since we took our seats. But the strangest thing of all is—well, never mind that just now—see if you know the lady before I tell you more."

Gertrude put up her glass, and, taking a sweeping glance around the opposite balcony, finally fixed it upon a party of four in the front row.

Yes, she saw sitting there a lady dressed in black velvet, wearing diamonds, and using a white feather fan. She was bending forward slightly, and her eyes seemed to be fastened upon Gertrude.

She was perhaps forty-five years of age, having a very beautiful face, though there was a peculiar wistfulness in her eyes, a rather sad expression about her mouth, and a strangely intent look on her countenance. While there was something very familiar about her, Gertrude was sure that she had never seen her before.

"Do you see her?" Allan asked.

"Yes, distinctly."

"Do you observe anything peculiar about her?"

"I do not know; and yet—— What is it?" she questioned, lowering her glass, and turning to look directly into his eyes.

"You are the very counterpart of that woman, only many years younger," he said.

"Impossible!" ejaculated Gertrude; but a flash of conviction came over her—a thrill of confirmation ran through every nerve at his words.

"It is the truth. Miss Van Ausdel and I have been talking about it for some time; the woman herself has discovered it. Have you no relatives in the city, Miss Richards?"

"No; none that I am aware of," she answered, with averted eyes.

By relatives Allan had, of course, meant kindred, so she had answered him truthfully; yet she felt a trifle guilty.

She turned her glass again toward the beautiful woman, and another thrill went quivering through her. She understood now what she could not analyze when she had looked before. It almost seemed as if she were looking into her own face.

"Is it a case of dual existence, Miss Richards?" Allan queried, with a smile.

"It is certainly very strange; I cannot understand it at all," Gertrude answered.

"One might almost believe her to be an elder sister, or even your mother," said her companion.

"I never had a sister," Gertrude sadly replied, "and my mother died years ago. No, it can be no one belonging to me, and yet the resemblance affects me strangely."

"The lady is with General Wallace and his daughters. Perhaps we may meet her in society this winter, and learn who she is," Blanch observed, with an ill-concealed yawn. Gertrude was receiving altogether too much of Allan's attention to suit her, and she thought best to interrupt the conversation.

As Allan was conducting Blanch and Gertrude from the opera house, they almost came upon the party that had attracted their observation in the balcony. The woman whom Gertrude so closely resembled was leaning upon the arm of the gentleman, and was chatting in an animated way with him. She seemed far more lovely from a nearer view, and her manner and language betokened a lady of high culture and intelligence. She ceased speaking as her eyes fell upon Doctor Livingstone and his companions, and the same eager, wistful look that they had previously observed came into her face.

Miss Van Ausdel bowed to General Wallace and the two young ladies with him, and was upon the point of pressing forward to speak to them, and hoping thus to get an introduction to the strange lady, when the crowd



surged in between them, and made it impossible to do so.

That night Gertrude lay awake for some time, thinking over all that had transpired during the last few hours; but at length she fell into a doze, and dreamed that she was in Paris.

She dreamed to be in the Place de la Concorde, in a shaded walk. Some one was addressing her, though at first she could not make out who it was. Then, all at once, a wild, haggard face appeared before her eyes, while about it, in the distance, there floated a picture of a beautiful woman; a wiry, clawlike hand grasped her arm, fierce black eyes held her spellbound, and a weird voice hissed in her ears:

"I will choke you! I will choke you!"

It seemed as if she was suffocating. She tried to struggle—to cry out for help—but could not; then there came the sensation of falling miles and miles into some bottomless abyss, and suddenly she found herself sitting erect in bed, trembling in every limb, perspiration starting from every pore.

She knew instantly that it had only been a dream; but it was a dream that brought strange enlightenment with it, and instinctively she seemed to know who the woman was whom she had seen at the opera that night.

"How strange that I did not think of it at once," she murmured; "but that woman must be that madman's Gertrude."

The more she thought of it, the more she was convinced of the fact. The stranger appeared to be about the age that the woman whom the maniac had loved would be, if she had lived till this time. She looked enough like Gertrude to have been her twin sister, but for the disparity of years, and it was reasonable to suppose that there could not be another person in the world who would resemble her so closely.

But who was she? what was her history? and how came they to resemble each other so closely?"

"What strange influences there must be at work in the world," Gertrude thought, "to make a dream a con-

ting link between two such experiences, and help it explain a mystery, which otherwise might have remained such for all time."

She lay awake for a long while pondering upon it, while it haunted her for many days afterward.

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A couple of days later a friend of Mrs. Overton called, and requested to be introduced to Gertrude. She informed her that she was arranging for a musicale for the benefit of the new hospital; that she had heard her sing at the soldiers' orphans' benefit, a month previous, and had resolved then to secure her services for this occasion, if possible.

"Do not refuse me, please," Mrs. Abbot pleaded, in conclusion, "for I have set my heart upon having your name upon my programme;" then she named over what other talent she had secured.

Gertrude said she would be very happy to oblige her, and would sing twice for her if she would provide her with a good accompanist.

"Thanks; and now I have just one more request," continued Mrs. Abbot, greatly delighted with her success; "please wear something bright and pretty, for I am going to try to make it a very *recherche* affair."

"By that, I suppose, I am to understand you would like me to appear in full evening costume," said Gertrude, smiling.

"If you will. Of course, if you object, I will not insist; only it gives a sort of *éclat* to anything of the kind when the artists appear in costume."

"Very well; I will endeavor to please you in that respect," Gertrude amiably responded, and the lady took her leave, much gratified with the success of her mission.

The evening of the musicale arrived, and Mrs. Abbot's elegant and spacious parlors were filled to overflowing.

The talent engaged for the occasion was all amateur. The orchestra, composed of six pieces and of persons who were friends of Mrs. Abbot, opened the concert

with a selection from Verdi's "Ernani," which was finely executed. The programme throughout was a good one, and promised a rich treat for the lovers of music.

Allan Livingstone had taken tickets for this concert, simply because the object was a deserving one, and Mrs. Abbot had promised that he should be highly entertained, if he would honor the occasion with his presence.

It was rather late when he made his appearance at her door and found that it was impossible to obtain a seat—that he must stand if he cared to remain.

He concluded he would listen for a while and then go home. A glee was just being rendered by a male quartette as he entered, and this was so inspiring that he waited eagerly for more, although he was compelled to stand in a doorway where he could not get even a glimpse of the stage. Presently there was a little rustle of expectation, then some one began to play a prelude, after which a pure, sweet voice rose, clear as a bell, through the roof, swelling with power and richness into the glorious song.

"Who is that?" Allan questioned, as he lifted his programme, at which he had not even glanced until now, and began to scan the names upon it.

"That is Miss Richards," answered a voice near him. "Glorious voice, isn't it?"

"What Miss Richards?" Allan demanded, with a sudden thrill.

"Miss Helen Richards—the artist—Mrs. Overton's friend."

The young physician waited to hear no more; he pushed his way farther into the room, and finally succeeded in getting a position near a window, where, in the shadow of some draperies, he could see without being seen.

Yes, it was the Miss Richards whom he knew, and he scarcely breathed as he stood there watching her and listening to her gifted and cultivated voice.

She was standing in an easy attitude, by the side of

the piano, near a mass of pink and white chrysanthemums, and unconsciously making a beautiful picture for the audience to look at.

There was a breathless stillness throughout the room while the song lasted; then deafening applause demanded her return.

She came half reluctantly, but smiling her thanks to her enthusiastic audience. She glanced around the room as if looking for some one, hesitated an instant, and then spoke to her accompanist. He nodded, struck up a few chords, and then she broke forth into a sweet little ballad that went straight to the heart of every listener.

As the first line of it fell upon Allan Livingstone's ears a smothered exclamation burst from him, and his eyes never left Gertrude's face while she sang the three verses through.

When she ceased he was white to the lips, and his face was full of pain.

"I have been blind—half-witted," he said to himself, as he pulled the draperies more closely about him, for he was deeply agitated. "She is an artist; she sings like a nightingale—and that song, too! She has recently returned from abroad; her eyes are gray, her hair nut-brown, and she is beautiful beyond any one I have ever seen! If she should prove to be Gertrude!"

Subsequently he joined Gertrude, and they entered into conversation.

Mrs. Abbot came bustling up just then, and laying her hand upon Gertrude's arm, said:

"You are to stay, my dear, you know." Then, turning to her companion, she added: "I am very glad to see you here, Doctor Livingstone. I hope you enjoyed the musicale, and now may I ask a favor of you?"

"A dozen, madam, if you will."

"Then, first, I am going to ask you to remain to a little supper that I have provided for my artists, and, second, act as Miss Richards' escort home afterward. You both go the same way, and I will send you in my carriage."

"Two *such favors*, Mrs. Abbot, it will be simply a pleasure to grant," Allan replied, and bestowing a delighted glance upon Gertrude.

"Thanks. Then, if Miss Richards is agreeable, I will leave her to your care during supper also;" and the busy woman was gone before they could reply, taking it for granted that she had arranged matters satisfactorily for both parties.

A little later, when Gertrude laid her hand upon Allan's arm, and they passed out together to the supper room, Mrs. Abbot observed them with a look of satisfaction, and mentally but rather enigmatically remarked:

"What a handsome couple! Who knows——"

The very next morning found Allan making a second call upon Gertrude in her studio.

"I told you, Miss Richards, that I should make you another call, and that I might wish to get you to paint something for me. I have come this morning to see if you will undertake it," he said, glancing about to see if she had anything new upon the walls.

"That will depend somewhat upon what kind of a picture you wish," Gertrude replied, after a moment's hesitation.

She shrank from doing anything for him for money. The price that she had already received for that other picture was still a source of annoyance to her.

"I want you to paint the portrait of my mother," Allan said abruptly, and with his grave eyes fixed upon her face.

His mother! Oh, what a shock of pain those words sent through her, and for a moment she was dumb.

"Have you a good likeness of her?" she at last asked.

"Excellent. I slipped it into my pocket for you to see," and he drew it forth and held it up before her.

For a moment her sight was so blurred that she could not distinguish a line of that familiar face, and a feeling of faintness came over her. As soon as she could command her voice sufficiently to speak, she



looked up at him, frankly meeting his eye, and said, with a smile:

"It is a beautiful picture; your mother had a lovely face, Doctor Livingstone."

He sighed and began to think he had been very foolish to try to test her thus.

"Yes, she had," he said, "and she was good as she was beautiful."

"I know—she must have been."

She had almost said, "I know she was," but checked herself in time. Then she added, though her under lip trembled in spite of herself:

"I am afraid I cannot do justice to this face in oil."

"Do you object to doing portraits?"

"Oh, no, I have painted several; but they were from living objects."

"I have not said that my mother was not living," Allen said, while a flash of triumph lighted his eyes.

"I know you have not, but I am quite sure I have heard Miss Van Ausdel say that Mrs. Livingstone was not living."

"True. I had forgotten that she must know. Pardon me, but I was a little surprised that you should be aware of the fact," he said apologetically, but his heart sank at being thus thrown off the trail again.

Gertrude looked down upon the picture again. Somehow her heart yearned to put that face upon canvas, and she was suddenly inspired with the belief that she could do it better than any one else. She had seen it and loved it in life; she knew its every expression, and surely no one could do it such justice as she.

"I will try it, if you wish, Doctor Livingstone," she said at last; but she was now very pale with the effort she was making to retain her self-possession.

"Thank you; I do wish it," he replied.

Then, noticing how pale she had grown, he added:

"Miss Richards, I am afraid, however, that you are working among these paints more than is good for you. I believe you do not have fresh air enough."

"I have my walk back and forth from Mrs. Overton's, you know," she said.

"But I am sure you need more than that. You are accustomed to the saddle; come and ride with me this afternoon," Allan said eagerly.

Gertrude looked up brightly. She would like it so much, and it was very pleasant to have him so thoughtful for her.

"It would be very pleasant, and I thank you; but I fear my pupils would suffer."

"Give them a half holiday," Allan pleaded. "We are having such charming weather—these October days are simply perfect. Let me call for you at three o'clock."

He was bending toward her, his handsome dark eyes looking earnestly into hers. It was a rare temptation, and she longed unutterably for a brisk canter with him as of old, and, with a brilliant color flashing into her cheeks, she yielded, and replied:

"Yes, I will go. You may call for me at three."

Allan thanked her, and went away to make his arrangements, a strange tumult in his heart. It was very delightful when, that afternoon, attired in her perfectly fitting habit of dark blue cloth, with a hat of the same color, caught up at the side with a pretty knot of velvet and one graceful ostrich tip, and knowing—she could not help knowing—that she was very beautiful, they rode side by side through the lovely avenues of the park, and afterward along the smooth lake road. Allan saw at once that his lovely companion was perfectly at home in the saddle, and a fearless and graceful rider.

"What shall I call my horse?" she asked, after they had started. "I always like to know a horse's name; it establishes a sort of confidence between him and his rider, and makes him more easy to manage."

"I am sure I do not know what to call him. He belongs in the stable where I keep Prince Hal. I simply called for a safe, first-class saddle horse, suitable for a lady's use. Do you like him?"

"He is spirited and clever," Gertrude answered, "and very handsome, is he not?"

"Yes, I think so. Do you find him easy?"

"Moderately so. He responds to the lightest touch upon the bridle, and he is evidently a clever old trotter."

Gertrude had bent forward, speaking in a low, caressing tone, while she affectionately smoothed the glossy mane of the handsome creature. Allan's face flushed a sudden crimson, and then grew deadly pale. That simple act, the tone, even the words, brought back to him a thousand memories.

Just so Gertrude, in the old days, had been wont to speak to the pretty pony that she used to ride. Just so she used to pet it, stroking the flowing mane with her gloved hand, while "a clever old trotter" had been her invariable form for expressing her approbation when Brown Bess had behaved unusually well.

Involuntarily he put out his hand and laid it upon her bridle, while he regarded her with a strange look.

Instantly she sat erect, suddenly recalled to herself, and remembering that she was trespassing upon dangerous ground.

She gave Allan a startled glance.

"What is it?" she questioned in a constrained tone, and studying his face with half-frightened eyes.

But he answered calmly and in the most matter-of-fact tone imaginable:

"Do not forget, Miss Richards, that he is a strange horse. Please be a little on your guard, for I should never forgive myself if anything should happen to you."

Gertrude breathed more freely. She had not betrayed herself then. Allan must have forgotten how foolishly she used to talk to Brown Bess; she must be more guarded in the future, however, but it seemed so like old times riding by his side, looking into his loved face, and hearing his voice, that she could hardly realize that years and trouble had built up almost insurmountable barriers between them.

Their ride was delightful; the day was a perfect one,

the air exhilarating, and their hearts just in harmon with it all, and when they returned after a couple of hours, there was a light on Gertrude Livingstone's face that was "never on land or sea."

When Allan lifted her from the saddle before Mrs Overton's door, he looked down into her eyes with a strangely earnest expression.

"Miss Richards," he said in a low tone, "you have helped me pass a delightful afternoon. If I can find a better horse for you, may I claim your companionship again soon?"

"Oh, the horse is well enough, thank you, After I got used to him I did not mind his gait at all, and I have enjoyed it so much. I have not had such a canter since—for years," Gertrude returned, with a feeling of shyness that was very unusual to her.

"I am glad if you have enjoyed it; but you have not answered my question yet. Will you go again with me some day soon?"

Allan had held her hand in his ever since she dismounted, and the warm color suffused her face as she felt its close, tender grasp.

"Yes, I will go," she said, and then he released her, bade her good afternoon, and left her, but conscious that he was fast losing his heart to this beautiful woman who was such a mystery to him.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### TWO INTRODUCTIONS.

Gertrude tripped up the steps, passed into the hall, and was about to bound up the stairs to her room, a smile on her lips, a song of gladness in her heart, when she encountered Blanch coming down. She perceived that something had gone wrong with her the moment she encountered her glance. She had assumed her haughtiest air; there was a repellant look upon her face, a sneer upon her lips.

"Well, Miss Richards, it is evident from your appearance that you enjoyed your ride," she observed, in a cold, sarcastic tone.

"Indeed I have, Miss Van Ausdel, and it is a pity that *you* do not enjoy horseback riding, it is such a healthful, exhilarating exercise; you miss a great deal," Gertrude answered pleasantly, yet deeply pained by Blanch's manner.

"It is only too evident that I 'miss a great deal,' " she retorted sharply.

Gertrude looked up with inquiring eyes, but with burning cheeks.

"It was my privilege," Blanch went on bitterly, "to witness the very tender parting between you and Doctor Livingstone a few moments ago."

"Miss Van Ausdel, I do not understand you in this mood at all," Gertrude returned, with quiet dignity, though her face was still crimson, for she knew that Allan's manner toward her had been tender.

"Perhaps not; however, it seems to me that it would be more becoming in a person of your position to be a trifle more reserved with a gentleman whom you have never met a dozen times," sneered the beauty wrathfully.

For an instant Gertrude found it difficult to exercise self-control.

What would Blanch Van Ausdel say if she knew just what her position was with reference to Allan Livingstone?

"I am not aware that I have ever been guilty of going beyond the bounds of propriety. And whatever my position may be, I trust I shall never forget to honor it as a lady," she said, with an air that took even Blanch Van Ausdel's breath away for a moment.

"I would really like to know where my sister picked you up. A 'lady,' indeed! At least I should suppose you would have more modesty than to thrust yourself between me and my friends."

"I cannot understand how I have offended you," Gertrude began, when Blanch interrupted haughtily:



"I presume not, but it is evident that you understand what is for your own interest."

She waited for no reply, but flaunted by with uplifted head, and, sweeping into the drawing-room, banged the door after her in a most unlady-like manner.

Gertrude passed upstairs, all the brightness gone from her face and a heavy load upon her heart. She read Blanch Van Ausdel's secret like an open book. She knew that she loved Allan Livingstone, and she pitied her from the depths of her heart, for from her own experience she knew how she must suffer to have bestowed her affections upon a noble man and know that they were unrequited.

She sent a servant to tell Mrs. Overton that she had a headache and would not come down to dinner, and then she retired; to weep out her grief and save herself from being interviewed as to the cause of her sudden indisposition.

The next morning, however, she went down to breakfast as if nothing unusual had occurred. She met Blanch with her customary smile and greeting, but the girl's manner was cold and repulsive, and matters were not mended when, just as she was about to leave the table, a servant brought in a lovely bouquet of roses and laid it beside her plate, together with a note addressed to her in the clear, firm handwriting which she knew and loved so well.

She escaped to her room as soon as she could, her heart beating with a wild, sweet joy as she unfolded her note and read:

"MY DEAR MISS RICHARDS: I hope our canter yesterday did not prove too much for you. But I have been somewhat fearful that I took you too far for the first time, and conscience-smitten, too, because I was not more particular to assure myself that you had an easy horse. I will see that you are better served next time. Meanwhile, as I am to be out of town for a few days, please let my simple offering grace your table.

"Yours sincerely,                      ALLAN LIVINGSTONE."

Gertrude bent and touched her lips to his name as she finished reading the brief note, and then flushed crimson at herself for it. A little sigh escaped her at the thought that Allan was to be gone and she should not see him for several days; but she would have his roses, and meantime she would endeavor to get his mother's portrait well under way before his return. She began it immediately, and gave every spare minute to it, going earlier than usual to her studio, and working upon it as long as she could see.

Five days passed thus, and the face upon her canvas began to take on the familiar expression of the beloved friend of her youth. She worked later on the last day, for she had an engagement for the evening, and she was at last obliged to go home to prepare for it, though she left her work reluctantly.

She had promised Mrs. Preston, the mother of one of her pupils, that she would be present at a reception which she was to give, and sing for her once or twice. A carriage was to be sent for her at nine, but at half-past eight she was ready, and she went down to the drawing-room to wait for it. A little before this, however, Allan had called, and Blanch had received him alone and was now enjoying a tête-à-tête with him, and flattering herself that she should have his company all the evening.

"You are quite a stranger," she observed, after the usual greetings had been passed between them.

"Yes, I have been out of town for a few days," he replied.

Ah! that must have been what he had written in his note to Gertrude, she thought, with a pang of jealousy.

"You are all well, I trust?" Doctor Livingstone continued, as she did not reply.

"Yes, thank you. My sister is engaged with Beth and Florence just at present, but she will, no doubt, be down soon."

"And—Miss Ricards?" Allan asked.

"Miss Richards is well," Blanch replied coldly, and

with a withering glance at him from beneath her white lids, which it was well, perhaps, he did not see.

"Is she at home this evening?"

"She is engaged for Mrs. Preston's reception; but really, I do not know whether she has gone or not," Miss Van Ausdel returned indifferently.

Allan looked disappointed, but changed the subject, and chatted pleasantly upon general topics for a while, though he mentally resolved that he would excuse himself presently, and slip over to Mrs. Preston's, for he, too, had an invitation for her reception. But even as he was planning to do this, the drawing-room door opened and Gertrude, a vision of beauty, appeared upon the threshold. She flushed upon seeing Allan, and her eyes lighted with pleasure.

He sprang forward to greet her, saying:

"I am glad I did not miss you, Miss Richards. I feared I should, as Miss Van Ausdel said you were engaged for the evening."

"Yes, I go to Mrs. Preston's. Ah!" as the bell rang just then, "that must be her carriage now; she has sent for me earlier than I expected."

It was the carriage, and Blanch could scarcely repress a chuckle of triumph as it was announced, for Gertrude would be obliged to go and leave the handsome doctor behind her. But Allan said he would attend her to the carriage, and, as they went out together, he added in a low tone:

"Perhaps I may see you again later, Miss Richards. I, also, have a card for Mrs. Preston's reception; say you will be glad to see me, and I will come."

Gertrude trembled with joy.

"I shall be glad," she replied, with simple earnestness; and then he put her into the carriage, drew the robe carefully about her—for there was a chill in the air—and she was driven away.

He then returned to Blanch, and remained nearly an hour longer, much to her gratification, for she had been afraid he would offer to accompany Gertrude—toward whom she was beginning to feel a bitter dislike—almost

hatred. But at half-past nine Allan took his leave, and turned his steps toward Mrs. Preston's residence. After greeting that lady, he began to look about for Gertrude.

She was just going to sing, and Allan was not very well pleased to see that she was being escorted to the piano by a tall, distinguished-looking gentleman—a stranger to him—yet he appeared to be on the most friendly terms with his fair companion.

He stood by her side until she had finished her song; then, offering his arm again, he escorted her back to her seat, and coolly sat down beside her. But Allan noticed that her glance wandered all about the room, as if in search of some one, even while she appeared to be in animated conversation with the stranger. At last her eyes lighted upon him, and the flash that for an instant sprang into them told him that she had been looking for him, and was "glad to see him."

He made his way to her at once, whereupon she arose, and introduced him to "Mr. Winthrope, a friend whom she had met abroad."

Allan thought Mr. Winthrope gave a slight start when he heard his name, and observed him more critically than the occasion required, but he was prepossessed with him, notwithstanding, and was soon enjoying a very pleasant chat with him.

Gertrude could see, from the way that Frank Winthrope regarded Allan, that certain suspicions had been aroused in his mind. Her heart had almost failed her, when, upon arriving at Mrs. Preston's, Mr. Winthrope had been almost the first one to greet her. She knew Allan would soon come, and that she would be obliged to introduce the two men, and for a moment she was tempted to make some excuse to her hostess and go home again. But, upon second thought, she resolved to face the situation boldly and let matters have their way.

Still, she felt ill at ease, standing there and listening to their conversation, and she was not sorry when Mrs. Preston approached her, saying:

"Miss Richards, will you come with me? I have a friend who desires an introduction to you."

Gertrude signified her willingness to accompany her hostess, excused herself to Allan and Mr. Winthrope, and followed her to another room, where she found a surprise awaiting her.

Sitting in a low chair by a table there was a beautiful and elegantly clad woman. Gertrude started as she approached her, and a strange sensation came over her as the lady arose, took a step forward, and bent an eager, intent look upon her face.

"Mrs. Archibald," said Mrs. Preston, "this is the young lady I spoke of to you. It is the strangest thing in the world, but truly I feel as if I was about to introduce you to your shadow. Mrs. Archibald—Miss Richards."

The elder lady put forth her hand and grasped Gertrude's, while she gazed earnestly into her eyes.

"My dear," she said in a sweet, low voice, "I am very glad of this opportunity. I have wanted to meet you ever since I saw you that evening at the opera. Do you remember?"

"Yes, I remember," Gertrude answered mechanically, while she wonderingly studied that face, so like her own.

"I saw that you also noticed our remarkable resemblance to each other," Mrs. Archibald pursued. "It has haunted me ever since, and when I found you were here this evening, I resolved to become acquainted with you, if it were possible. Would you mind telling me your Christian name?"

"Helen," Gertrude answered, but feeling as if she was dreaming.

"Helen Richards. That is a pretty name. I used to know some people by the name of Richards, but they were English people. You are an artist, Mrs. Preston tells me?"

"Yes, I have a studio here in the city, and quite a large class of pupils."

"Sit down here and tell me a little about yourself. I feel strangely drawn toward you, if you will excuse me for saying so, and pardon my curiosity."

Mrs. Archibald gently drew Gertrude into a chair be-



side her, and seemed so sweet and gracious that the young girl's heart was won at once, though she shrank somewhat from being questioned about herself.

"Do your friends reside in the city?"

"No. If by friends you mean relations, I have none. I am alone in the world."

"Is it long since you lost your parents?"

"My mother died when I was two years of age. My father lived until I was ten."

"And who took care of you after that? Who attended to your education?"

"My guardian," Gertrude replied briefly.

"Who was your guardian, Miss Richards, and what was your father's Christian name?" her beautiful companion asked, with an eagerness that proved she did not realize that she was overstepping the bounds of politeness.

Gertrude flushed. She could not answer either of those questions, and she was upon the point of rising to excuse herself from the interview, when a familiar voice interposed:

"Pardon me, ladies, for interrupting you, but I have been commissioned to ask Miss Richards for another song."

Gertrude turned with a feeling of intense relief to find Frank Winthrop standing close beside her, while a few steps behind him she saw Allan, who appeared to be watching her and Mrs. Archibald with singular interest. She arose immediately, expressing her willingness to comply with the request. Then, introducing Allan to Mrs. Archibald, she took Mr. Winthrop's arm, and moved away with him. But Mrs. Archibald wished to hear the song, and, accepting Doctor Livingstone's escort, they, too, passed into the drawing-room.

"I commissioned myself to ask you to sing," Mr. Winthrop said, as he led Gertrude toward the piano. "I hope you will pardon me, but I was examining a picture near you when I overheard the lady's last question, and, knowing it would be a difficult one for you to answer, I interposed."

Gertrude gave him a grateful glance.

"You were very thoughtful, Mr. Winthrope," she said, "and to prove my gratitude I will sing for you anything you like best."

He smiled his thanks, and named something he had heard her sing in Paris, and instantly every voice was hushed to silence as her full, rich tones rang through the room.

After that, some one else claimed her attention, and Mr. Winthrope, with a queer suspicion in his mind, sought out Mrs. Archibald again. He easily found her, and drew her into conversation, and after a time remarked upon the striking resemblance between herself and Miss Richards.

"Do you not think it very singular?" the lady asked.

"Rather," he answered; "but not more singular than an incident that occurred while Miss Richards was in Paris."

"What was that, please?"

Mr. Winthrope, thus interrogated, related something of Gertrude's adventure in the Place de la Concorde.

Mrs. Archibald became deeply agitated as he proceeded. She grew red and white by turns. She trembled, and breathed with difficulty.

"You are sure the man was a maniac?" she asked when he concluded.

"Yes. It appeared he had become fascinated by a beautiful woman whose portrait he had been engaged to paint, many years ago. He had nearly completed it, when some great trouble overtook her. Miss Richards judged it was occasioned by the jealousy of her husband. She suddenly disappeared—never claiming her picture, or communicating with the artist—and he, poor fellow, lost his wits, and has never recovered them—— Ah! I'm afraid I've done mischief now, without meaning it."

This last exclamation burst in a startled tone from Mr. Winthrope, as the lady gasped and reeled in her chair, and he sprang forward just in time to save her

from falling to the floor, but she had fainted dead away.

She was borne into another room, and kindly cared for; but, though she soon recovered consciousness, she did not feel able to return to the company, and soon ordered her carriage, and went home.

"Miss Richards, I have made a discovery," Frank Winthrope whispered in Gertrude's ear half an hour later. "I have found out that the lady whom you resemble so closely was the innamorata of your Paris madman. I suspected it the moment I saw her, and after talking with her a little while I was sure of it."

"I know that," Gertrude answered, greatly to the gentleman's surprise.

"Why, I thought you never met the woman until tonight!"

"That is true."

"Then, how could you know? Did she say anything to lead you to suspect it?"

"No; and perhaps I should not have said that I know. But I felt very sure of it after seeing her at the opera one evening quite recently," Gertrude replied.

And then she related how she had been affected by the resemblance and her strange dream afterward, which led to the conviction that Mrs. Archibald and the madman's Gertrude were one and the same.

"It was very singular," said Mr. Winthrope.

"Yes; but how did you make the discovery?" Gertrude asked.

He related what had just transpired, and concluded by saying:

"I am deeply interested; I should like to read that romance—for I am certain there is one—from beginning to end." Then he added, breaking off sharply: "Now tell me, please, who is this Doctor Livingstone, to whom you introduced me this evening?"

Gertrude saw at once that he had begun to suspect

that the doctor was in some way connected with her own life. But she nerved herself to reply very quietly:

"He is a young physician to whom Mrs. Overton recently introduced me."

"Ah, he is a new acquaintance, then?"

Gertrude did not reply.

"Has he been in Chicago long?"

"He returned from Europe the last of September, having been abroad some eight months, I believe."

Mr. Winthrope smiled. He resolved upon a bold stroke; he believed, if he could understand just how matters stood, he might be able to do something toward restoring harmony and happiness to fond hearts.

"Mrs. Livingstone," he said, in a low, eager tone, "I believe I have been reading two romances to-night. Pardon me if I seem presuming, but you know that I am your friend."

Gertrude lifted her eyes to him, and grew suddenly pale.

She saw that he understood all her secret now.

"You will not betray me?" she pleaded.

"No, indeed. You know that you may trust me fully."

Gertrude shot a radiant glance up at her friend.

"Thank you," she said. "And now tell me something about yourself and Rose."

"Rose has returned, and is to be married at Christmas."

"So soon? How I wish I could go to her!"

"Can you not?"

"I am afraid I cannot."

"I may tell her that I have seen you?"

"Oh, yes; and that I shall send her some token. Is she very, very happy?" Gertrude asked wistfully.

"Blissful. There are only two persons in the world that are of any consequence just at present," Mr. Winthrope observed dryly.

Gertrude laughed. They chatted for a little longer upon various topics, and then Gertrude passed upstairs

to get her wraps and go home. When she came down, Allan stood at the foot of the stairs waiting for her.

"Let me take you home, Miss Richards," he said in an eager tone. "I have not been able to get half a dozen words with you this evening, and I have something to tell you."

Gertrude could not refuse, and after taking leave of Mrs. Preston they passed out together.

"Mr. Winthrop appears to be an old friend of yours, Miss Richards?" Allan said, after they were on their way.

"Yes, I became acquainted with him more than two years ago."

"He has also just returned from Europe, he tells me."

"Yes. I met him in Paris a little while before we left. I suppose he saved my life at that time."

"Ha! How?"

"He released me from a raving maniac."

Allan shivered slightly, and drew the hand that lay upon his arm close to him with a quick, impulsive movement that thrilled through every nerve in Gertrude's body.

"Mr. Winthrop has my everlasting gratitude," he said in a low voice. Then he added: "Miss Richards, I have found a better horse for you. Will you ride with me again to-morrow?"

"Yes," Gertrude responded, and she thanked him for the trouble he had taken for her, while a flush of joy illumined her face at this evidence of care for her.

They parted at Mrs. Overton's door with a brief good night, Allan promising to call for her at two to-morrow; but as Gertrude passed Blanch's door on the way to her own room, she heard, late as it was, a low, mocking laugh that convinced her that Miss Van Ausdel had again been playing the spy upon her movements.

A little past two o'clock the next day Allan presented himself before Mrs. Overton's mansion. He was mounted upon his own handsome horse, Prince



Hal, while a groom followed him with a beautiful brown mare, having a long flowing tail and mane, her soft coat shining like newest satin.

She tossed her pretty head, arched her glossy neck, and pawed the ground with one shapely hoof in a dainty, coquettish way that seemed to indicate a consciousness of her many superior qualities, and which made Beth and Florence, who were watching from the parlor windows, shout with delight.

Allan doffed his hat to the little girls, but there was an eager, expectant look upon his handsome face as he watched for the door to open and his companion to appear.

Presently Gertrude came out, looking flushed and beautiful. She tripped down the steps, nodding a smiling greeting to Allan, and then she turned to look at the horse that he had provided for her.

"Oh!" she cried, starting, and drawing in a quick breath, "what a lovely creature! She looks like—like——"

"Like what?" Allan asked, bending eagerly forward, as she suddenly checked herself.

"Like—a thoroughbred," Gertrude answered, but she had lost a little of her color, and was regarding the horse with wondering interest.

She went close to her side; she laid her hand upon her glossy neck, patting her softly, and said in a low voice, but in a somewhat absent-minded way:

"What a pretty pet!"

Instantly the horse turned her face to her, with a glad whinny. She laid her head upon Gertrude's shoulder, and began to paw the air with one slender foreleg.

Before she was aware of what she was doing, Gertrude had thrown her arms about the smooth brown neck, while a little quivering sob burst from her lips.

In that brief interval mistress and horse had recognized each other, for it was her own Brown Bess—the gentle, yet spirited pony upon which she used to

gallop over hill and vale in the old days at Livingstone Elms. But she suddenly remembered herself.

"What an affectionate pony this is!" she said, trying to appear indifferent; "I imagine she must have been a great pet, and I am very fond of a good horse."

She gave Brown Bess another gentle pat, which elicited a second whinny from her, and drew another smile from Allan, and she was almost sure then that he had done this thing to test her.

She lifted her head somewhat proudly, and, turning to the groom, signified her readiness to mount.

"Wait!" Allan commanded, as he sprang to the ground.

He threw his own bridle to the groom, and then went himself to assist Gertrude.

"I am glad you are pleased," he said, almost tenderly, as he held his hand for her foot.

"I fear you have given yourself a great deal of trouble, Doctor Livingstone," Gertrude said gravely, as she sprang to the saddle; but her heart was in a strange tumult at finding herself once more upon the back of her own horse.

"No, indeed," he answered quickly.

"She seems very gentle," she said in a matter-of-fact tone.

Again Allan's lips curled, and she was almost sure it was from a smile of amusement.

"I hope you will like her gait; and—here is your whip."

He unbuttoned his coat as he spoke, drew forth her own riding whip, and handed it to her. She recognized it by the handle, which was of handsomely carved coral.

She knew, then, that his recent absence had been caused by a trip to Livingstone Elms to bring Brown Bess for her, and he must have gone to her own room to get her whip, and all to test her.

It was a very clever scheme; and how coolly he had said, "and here is your whip."

She flushed as she took it. She was beginning to

lose confidence in herself as she realized how he was tracing her identity little by little, and yet it was a trifle annoying to have things taken for granted in this cool way.

"Thank you; it is a pretty whip," she said, and glancing at it as if she had never seen it before.

"Now, are you all right?" he asked, retaining her hand a moment as he put the bridle into it and looked into her eyes with a fond, earnest expression.

"Yes, thank you," she replied, but her glance drooped, and she bent forward to conceal her confusion and to pat Brown Bess, who instantly responded with another glad whinny.

She started up and sat erect. Every act only seemed to commit her more surely, and she was actually beginning to dread the ride. Allan sprang to his saddle, and they rode away, but not before Gertrude caught sight of a pair of vengeful, sullen eyes peering out upon them from between the shutters of an upper window.

They went out upon one of the suburban roads, and Gertrude had not much fear that Allan would attempt to discuss any momentous topics, for Brown Bess was so full of life that she had her hands full to manage her.

Upon rounding a sudden bend in the road they came to a place where some men were mending a leaking gas pipe, and they had been obliged to dig directly across the street, thus rendering it impassable at least for vehicles.

"Well, this looks rather unfavorable for us," Allan said, as he pulled up his horse and stopped. "I am afraid we shall have to go back, and I am sorry, for there is a view a little beyond that I wanted to show you—one that would do your artist soul good."

"Let us leap the ditch, it isn't very wide," Gertrude said, turning to him with a sparkle of daring in her eyes.

"Would you have courage? I could do it well enough, for I know Prince Hal through and through;

but you—and on a strange horse, too! Miss Richards, do you think it would be safe?"

Gertrude's cheeks burned. There was a touch of irony in every word that he had uttered, and yet there was a flash of lovelight in his eye that almost dazzled her.

She lifted her head proudly.

"I will risk it," she said with quiet decision.

Without another word Allan gave the signal to his horse, and the next moment was standing safely on the other side of the chasm.

Gertrude gathered up her skirt, settled herself in the saddle, then, bending down, she said in a low, coaxing tone

"Now, Bess, my beauty, let us see what you can do. Go now!"

And Brown Bess laid back her silken ears, gave an answering whinny, and bounded lightly over; then, with a roguish toss of the head, she took the bit between her teeth and went flying along over the road with the speed of the wind.

But Gertrude had no fear. She knew her horse, and she knew her power, too, though she would have preferred not to have been obliged to exercise it just then.

Allan flew after them, a little anxious, for he knew that Bess had not had much work of late and was full of spirit; but he could not help admiring that steady, graceful rider, who almost seemed to be a part of her horse, so well did she sit, so fearlessly did she ride.

She was keeping up a steady stream of talk in the old familiar way, half coaxing, half authoritative.

"Keep calm, my beauty, my fine old trotter; come let go there, my pet; steel isn't good for the teeth. Bess! Bess! Stop!"

The beautiful creature recognized her mistress, that voice, that firm yet gentle hand upon the bridle, and the old familiar words that Gertrude had invariably used when she got a little heady in the old days, and she calmed down like magic.

She relaxed her speed, she let go of the bit, and,

though she still tossed her pretty head in a coquettish, half-defiant way, and pranced as if the spirit of mischief was not quite exercised, she had yielded to her mistress' authority.

Allan came up with them, and appeared to regard it all as a piece of fine horsemanship; but his heart was throbbing heavily and the blood was coursing wildly through his veins. He knew her now. He knew that no stranger could ever have tamed Brown Bess like that, and he resolved that his claiming her should now only be a question of proper time and place.

"You have managed her beautifully," he said, as though he still believed her to be Miss Richards and only the pleasant companion of the hour. "You are an excellent horsewoman, and we took that leap very comfortably. I wish that all barriers could be as easily overcome."

Gertrude's heart leaped. She was sure those last words were significant.

"Are you engaged anywhere this evening?" Allan asked, as he assisted Gertrude to alight upon reaching Mrs. Overton's door.

His face was a trifle pale now, and his hand trembled slightly.

"No, I shall be at home," returned Gertrude.

"May I come again at eight?" he asked, bending to look into her eyes.

"Yes, you may come," she answered.

He thanked her for granting his request, and turned away.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### MRS. ARCHIBALD'S STORY.

At eight o'clock there was a vigorous pull at the Overtons' bell—much too vigorous for a friendly caller. Gertrude was in a small parlor leading from the hall, and her heart leaped into her throat as that



noisy peal rang through the house. But no one appeared to answer it, and Gertrude remembered that it was William's night out, and it was the chambermaid's duty to take his place, but she was dilatory.

There came a second ring, and this time a fainter one. Gertrude listened, but no one answered it.

She was on the point of rising to do so herself, when she heard some one come out of the drawing-room opposite and open the hall door.

Then a voice asked for Miss Richards, but it was not Allan's voice.

"Yes, Miss Richards lives here," she heard Blanch Van Ausdel answer.

Then Gertrude heard the words "note"—"box." "Please give them to her."

Her heart sank. No one would be likely to send her a note and box but Allan, and if he had done so he could not be coming as he had promised.

"Yes, thank you; I will attend to them," she heard Blanch respond. Then the messenger went away, and Miss Van Ausdel returned to the drawing-room and shut the door.

Gertrude waited some time for her to ring the bell and send a maid to her with her property, but she did nothing of the kind. What right had Blanch to thus intercept anything that came for her? And what would she do about it? She thought a moment, and then her resolution was taken. She arose and passed into the drawing-room, thinking perhaps Blanch was waiting, hoping she would come down and she would give them to her.

She entered at one door just as Mrs. Overton came in another. Blanch was standing under a chandelier with an open box in her hand, while the aroma of roses and heliotrope was floating through the room.

"What have you here, Blanch?" her sister asked, going forward to her, while Gertrude stood dumfounded.

"A box of flowers from Doctor Livingstone," Miss

Van Ausdel responded, sweeping an indescribable look at Gertrude.

"Ah! Then he has remembered you this time. How lovely they are!" and Mrs. Overton bent to inhale their fragrance.

"Yes, and here is the note that came with them," said the audacious girl, laying the open sheet on her sister's palm.

Mrs. Overton began to read, then glanced up quickly and with some surprise.

"My dear!" she said, repeating the words she had read. "I had no idea that you and Doctor Livingstone were upon such intimate terms!"

"Hadn't you?" and Miss Van Ausdel sniffed at the flowers in her hands with a conscious air.

Mrs. Overton read on

"I am sorry I cannot come to you to-night as I promised, for I had something very important that I wished to say to you; but a telegram has just arrived saying that my father is dying and wants me. I must go to him at once—there is not a moment to spare, for the train leaves in half an hour. Adieu until I return.

Yours,

ALLAN."

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Overton, after finishing the above. "I am surprised to learn that matters have gone so far as this. I had begun to think——"

"Well, what had you begun to think?" sharply queried Blanch.

Gertrude could endure no more.

"Mrs. Overton," she said, going forward with quiet dignity, but with very red cheeks and blazing eyes, "I have reasons for thinking that both this box and note were left at the door for me."

"Must you have everything?" demanded Blanch in a furious tone.

"No, nothing save what belongs to me," Gertrude returned calmly, though she was shaking with an inward tremor, "but, Miss Van Ausdel, I was in the re-

ception parlor when the man came and left the box and note for me."

Blanch grew startingly pale as she heard this.

"It is a l——" she began.

"Stop, Blanch," said her sister in an authoritative tone. "Do not forget yourself."

Then, turning to Gertrude, she continued a little stiffly:

"Helen, is it not just possible that you may be mistaken?"

"No, I am not mistaken, Mrs. Overton, for I heard distinctly. The bell rang twice, and for some reason no servant came to answer it; I was upon the point of doing so myself when Miss Van Ausdel came out from here and went to the door. I heard a man ask if I was at home; she told him 'yes.' He said something about a 'note' and 'box' to be given to me. Of course I do not know what may be in the note, but I can surmise something of its import. Doctor Livingstone promised to call upon me this evening at eight o'clock. I was waiting for him when the bell rang, and naturally supposed that the note was from him, and would explain why he did not come."

Mrs. Overton looked greatly distressed as she listened to this explanation.

"Blanch, I am afraid you have done wrong. I believe that the note and box were left for Helen," she said.

Blanch dashed the box of flowers down upon the table in a blaze of passion.

"Yes, they were," she cried fiercely, "and she is welcome to them now that I know their contents. But, Grace, let me tell you that I have endured this sort of thing just as long as I shall. Either Helen Richards leaves your house to-morrow morning or—I shall. I will not live under the same roof with her another day. Where did you pick up the adventuress?" she went on, growing every moment more furious as she gave the rein to her tongue. "There has always been a mysterious something about her that I could not

understand. I believe she is an imposter—a miserable, artful coquette, who is using all her wiles to win my friends from me, and ruin my prospects in life. She must go, I tell you——”

“Blanch, you are mad—demented, to talk thus,” Mrs. Overton said, interrupting this tornado of wrath.

“I am mad—desperate! You will find me a perfect fury if this thing is to go on.”

“If what thing is to go on?”

“If this girl is to stay here and win Allan Livingstone from me. There, I have said it now—if you have not suspected my secret before, you know it now.”

Gertrude was dismayed, almost heartbroken over this dreadful scene.

She walked to the table, and said with sudden resolution:

“Mrs. Overton, I will, if you please, read this note, since it belongs to me, and then I have a confession I wish to make to you. I am sorry now that I did not tell you in the first place.”

“Confession!” sneered Blanch. “I told you she was an imposter.”

Gertrude read her note and she was sure from its beginning—those two fond words, “my dear,” and its affectionate ending, “yours, Allan,” that he was certain of her identity, and that his errand there that night was to have been to claim her as his wife and sweep all mystery and doubts forever out of sight.

She slipped the note into her pocket, and just glanced at her flowers; then sat down by the table and leaned her head upon one hand, while her companions watched her grave face with something of wonder and curiosity.

“Mrs. Overton,” she began, “I told you once that sometime I would tell you more of my history than I felt at liberty to divulge when you first took me into your family. I find I cannot keep my secret any longer, and that you will soon learn it from another unless I disclose it myself. And first, to prove to you and

Miss Van Ausdel that I have done her no wrong, nor attempted to interfere in any way with her prospects, and that, had I never come to Chicago, Doctor Livingstone could never have been more than a friend to her, I——”

“That is a very positive assertion; I hope you will be able to prove your position,” interrupted Blanch sarcastically.

“I shall be able; Miss Van Ausdel, I am—Doctor Livingstone’s wife!”

Miss Van Ausdel tossed her head skeptically.

“Why has not Doctor Livingstone claimed you as his wife if what you state is true?” she demanded.

“Because he has not recognized me—he has only very recently begun to suspect my identity.”

“Nonsense,” muttered Blanch impatiently. “Why haven’t you made yourself known to him, then?”

“For various reasons,” Gertrude said, flushing.

It was very hard to sit there and have to endure these taunts and insults, and she was half tempted to fly to her room and not undertake to prove her statements. Then she thought she owed it to Mrs. Overton, who had always been most kind to her. Turning to her and ignoring Blanch’s presence from that time, she said:

“It may seem very strange to you, dear Mrs. Overton, that a man should not be able to recognize his own wife; but let me ask if you would suppose me to have been the original of the ‘dowdy’ of the exposition?”

“Never!” exclaimed Mrs. Overton in astonishment, while Blanch gazed at her rival with a blank expression that was almost ludicrous.

“It is true, nevertheless; that is an exact likeness of myself as I was at fourteen, and Allan Livingstone is the original of the youth. I painted that picture myself and sent it to the exposition, never dreaming that he would see it, and it represents a scene—an incident in our own lives. He recognized it instantly,



and, if you remember, it affected him rather strangely at the time."

"I remember," said Mrs. Overton, as she recalled his strange remarks and looks.

"Grace, how can you humor her sufficiently to appear to believe this trumped-up story? I have told you that Allan Livingstone's wife is dead," interposed Blanch impatiently.

"Mrs. Overton," Gertrude resumed, "Doctor Livingstone's wife was not drowned. The day of his return from abroad was the very day before you sailed for Europe, and the young girl who was rescued by the steamer in which you were a passenger was his wife, whom everybody supposed to have been drowned."

"Why, Helen, you must be Gertrude Livingstone, of whom Fanny Long told us so much."

"Yes, I am Gertrude Livingstone," Gertrude admitted.

"What a romance! But begin at the beginning, dear, and tell me all the story, for I am deeply interested. I will try to keep quiet. Do go on."

Spellbound, Mrs. Overton heard Gertrude's story, which the reader is so familiar with that it need not be repeated. At its close Mrs. Overton remarked:

"How strange that you should wish to evade such a man as Allan Livingstone."

"If I could have been sure that he cared for me it might have been different," said Gertrude. "After he began to show me some attention, I said to myself, 'If he should learn to love me, it would be very easy to reveal myself;' and so I resolved to wait and see how matters would end.

"But he began to suspect me very soon. I nearly betrayed myself outright by singing, in response to an encore at Mrs. Abbot's, a little ballad that I used to frequently sing when I was a child. I did not know that Allan was there, but he was, and he came to me afterward and questioned me about it, but I answered him in a way that puzzled him, and made him think he had made a mistake. He then tried to test me by

bringing me his mother's likeness to copy, but I managed, even with that dear face looking into mine, to retain my composure and talk in a business-like way.

"But to-day, dear Mrs. Overton, I know he was satisfied; he completed his triumph by bringing me my own horse, Brown Bess, to ride. She knew me the moment I touched her and spoke to her, and I was thrown completely off my guard. I am very sure I committed myself beyond recall, though he had no opportunity to charge me with my identity, for our horses were so spirited that we could not converse a great deal. He told me, however, upon leaving me, that he should call at eight to-night, and I am sure he was intending to settle this vexed question for all time; but it seems that he has been called to his father, and it may be some time before he will return to Chicago.

"Now, dear friend, have I satisfied you regarding my identity—that I am Gertrude Livingstone?" the young wife concluded, turning to Mrs. Overton, and searching her face anxiously.

"Entirely; there is not a doubt in my mind," that lady responded heartily.

Gertrude glanced with wistful appeal toward Blanch. She longed to be at peace with her; it was not in her heart to be at enmity with any one.

Mrs. Overton observed the look, and turned to her sister.

"Blanch," she said, "you have heard this story, and you can see as readily as I that it must all be true. Have you nothing to say—no apology to make—no congratulations to offer?"

But Blanch Van Ausdel might have been dead for any sign that she gave that she had heard; and Mrs. Overton indignant at her perversity and want of feeling, shrugged her shoulders and said:

"Let her alone; I hope she will come to her senses by and by, and, in the meantime, don't you grieve, my dear Hel—Gertrude—I must not forget again—for you are free from all blame in my estimation."

Mrs. Overton was not insensible to her sister's sorrow and mortification, but she felt that she had acted very unlady-like, while, judging from experience, she did not believe that her heart was wounded beyond healing. Gertrude gathered up her flowers with a sigh, and, bidding her friend good night, went up to her room to prepare for the next move in her checkered life.

She had resolved to leave the house that had been her pleasant home for so long early the next morning, and go out once more into the world by herself until Allan should return to claim her as his wife. She would not remain to cause trouble in Mrs. Overton's family or subject herself longer to Blanch's scorn and dislike.

When she went down to breakfast the next morning, she found no one at the table but Mr. and Mrs. Overton. Both greeted her with great kindness, and Mr. Overton tendered his congratulations to her, upon the brighter prospects awaiting her, in his heartiest manner.

When the meal was over and they arose, Gertrude extended her hand to Mr. Overton, who was upon the point of leaving the room as usual, and said, though with tremulous lips:

"I must say good-by before you go."

"How so?" he asked, astonished.

"Because I am going away this morning."

"Where are you going?"

"I do not know as yet; I shall make some arrangement during the day. My trunks are packed, and if you will send them to me when I decide where I am to be, you will do me a kindness."

"No—no," cried Mrs. Overton in a voice of distress, "do not leave us like this—that foolish girl will get over her naughty freak by and by, and feel sorry for the past."

"Yes, I hope she will not grieve long," Gertrude answered gravely; "meantime it will be but simple

kindness to remove all painful reminders from her path."

Mr. Overton expostulated, Mrs. Overton entreated, but Gertrude remained firm in her purpose.

She went down to her studio feeling both sad and lonely.

About midday there came a strange tap upon her door, and, opening it, she found a boy standing without, who handed her a dainty note, having a faint odor of violets about it, with the brief information given in a keen, incisive tone:

"Answer wanted."

Opening the note, Gertrude read:

"MY DEAR MISS RICHARDS: I have been ill for several days, or I should have come to you before this. I shall not be able to go out for some time yet, so may I ask you to come to me at No. 12 — Street, for I wish very much to see you? Come at three this afternoon, if you can leave at that time, and oblige,

"Yours truly, G. ARCHIBALD."

Gertrude took a card and simply wrote:

"I will come at three. Yours, H. RICHARDS."

She inclosed it in an envelope, and sent it back by the boy to Mrs. Archibald.

Upon arriving at No. 12 — Street, which proved to be an elegant residence, she was shown into a room leading from the hall, and which was furnished with exquisite taste.

Presently the servant returned and desired her to go upstairs, as Mrs. Archibald was confined to her room and unable to come down.

She followed the girl to the door on the second floor, where she was ushered into a cheery, sunshiny chamber, where, upon a luxurious couch, Mrs. Archibald was reclining.

The room was exquisite in all its appointments, evi-

dencing not only the taste and refinement of its occupant, but a well-stocked purse besides.

"My dear, this is very kind of you," said Mrs. Archibald, holding out her white hand to Gertrude, and smiling a gracious welcome upon her.

"Sara," she continued, "draw that rocker for Miss Richards, then drop that curtain opposite a trifle, after which you may go, and I will ring when I need you."

The maid obeyed her mistress' directions, although she cast furtive and wondering glances from one woman to the other, and then quietly withdrew.

"Take off your hat and jacket, my dear, for I may want to keep you a long while, and you will be both weary and warm sitting with them on," Mrs. Archibald continued to Gertrude, after the girl had gone, and she obeyed in a mechanical way, and feeling almost as if she were moving in a dream.

"There," pursued the lady in a satisfied tone, "you look more comfortable, and I am sure I can talk to you better so. Have you been quite well since I saw you at Mrs. Preston's?"

"Yes, thank you; but I am sorry to find you so ill," Gertrude answered.

"I have not been well since that evening, and I was very much upset then. Miss Richards, do you know that what your friend, Mr. Winthrope, told me, about your adventure with a madman in Paris, was the cause of it?"

"I feared so, when he spoke to me about it afterward," Gertrude replied.

"I have wanted to see you ever since, and ask you to tell me more about it, and then I have something I wish to say to you regarding the matter."

Gertrude said she was very willing to tell her everything there was to tell, and, beginning at the beginning, she related the whole incident just as it had occurred.

Mrs. Archibald appeared to be deeply agitated during the recital, and when it was concluded she turned



to Gertrude, with a sad and weary expression on her beautiful face and said:

"My dear child, I have to tell you that I am the innocent cause of all that poor man's trouble, and of much more. But I did not know until the other evening that Monsieur Delorme became insane, and then the knowledge overcame me so that I have not yet been able to rally from it. Let me tell you just how it was," she said. "I feel as if I must tell you, and then you shall judge whether I have been guilty of wrong or not."

"Why should I judge you?" Gertrude asked.

"Because I ask you to—because I wish you to," responded Mrs. Archibald, with a quiet smile. "I was married when I was about your age—you must be twenty-one or twenty-two—and I had a fond, noble-hearted, though passionate, high-tempered husband. He had one glaring fault, however: He was as jealous as he was fond of me. But I loved him devotedly, in spite of all, and when a little child was given to us, we both felt as if our cup of happiness was full. We were living in London at this time, and I went a good deal into society. We met, one season, a young French artist—a fine, promising fellow, who seemed to entertain a great admiration for me. He was pleased to say that I was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, and he begged again and again to be permitted to paint my portrait.

"But this request I emphatically refused, as I was unwilling that my face should be set up for the public to gaze at. He was greatly disappointed, and, to pacify him, I told him at last that he might paint my little one. This appeared to please him—not, I am afraid, because of the employment and eclat that he expected to reap from the work, but because it would throw him more frequently into my society. I did not realize this, however, until afterward. The baby's picture was such a success that my husband remarked, one day, in Monsieur Delorme's presence:

“‘Gertrude, I only wish I had as good a portrait of you.’

“Monsieur looked up delighted.

“‘Now you will let me paint you,’ he said eagerly, after my husband had left the room.

“A pleasant idea had come to me. I said to myself, ‘I will give my husband my portrait on his next birthday, and it shall be a surprise to him.’ So I told monsieur that he should paint my picture, but not as a fancy piece—as he had wished, for his own studio—but a simple portrait for my own home. He appeared delighted, and I arranged for the work to be done in my own boudoir, and he was to come on certain days, and at a particular hour when my husband was absent in the city. My maid was always present during the sittings, for I was determined to do nothing beyond the bounds of propriety, and that no breath of scandal should touch my fair name. When each sitting was over, the picture was carefully removed to a small room and covered, until the painter came again, and thus no one would suspect what was going on.

“All went well until the day for the last sitting arrived; the picture was almost completed; the face would be finished that morning; and then monsieur was to take it to the studio and finish it, get it framed, and keep it until the birthday of my husband should arrive.

“But Monsieur Delorme looked ill on this last morning. He was pale and silent, a tired, anxious look was in his eyes, and he worked away with a desperate air that made me very uncomfortable. My nurse had been taken ill that morning, and I was forced to let my maid go into the nursery, thus leaving monsieur and me by ourselves. I never saw him work as he did that morning. He scarcely spoke except to bid me turn a little this way or that, and the time seemed unusually long, the position irksome to me. At last he threw down his brush with a violence that startled me.

"‘It is done, madame,’ he exclaimed, with a deep sigh. ‘I need come no more.’

"I expressed myself well pleased with the work. I knew it was a very faithful likeness, and I was sure that my husband would be delighted with it.

"Monsieur packed it carefully, gathered up his paints, and I ordered my own coachman to take them to his studio, which he did immediately.

"Then the artist turned to take leave of me. I was amazed at the grief and misery that were written on his face.

"‘Monsieur,’ I cried, ‘you are surely ill, or you are in trouble. What can I do for you?’

"He raised his eyes to me with a wild, intense look.

"‘Yes, trouble, trouble!’ he murmured, passing his hand across his brow with a weary, despairing movement.

"Then, suddenly, before I could suspect his intention, he had thrown himself upon the floor at my feet, seized my hand, and began to pour forth a stream of adulation that was simply appalling. My dear, it was an overwhelming outburst of worship, and one which none but a weak-minded and selfish man would be guilty of allowing himself to give way to before the wife of another. But I was so startled, so appalled, by his sudden declaration that, for the time, I was stricken dumb. I had no power to move or speak.

"Suddenly a slight noise behind me caused me to turn my head in that direction. My husband was standing upon the threshold of my room with a look upon his face that I shall never forget.

"I raised my hand imploringly, for I saw that he was furious," Mrs. Archibald resumed, after she had paused to rest a moment; "but he burst forth into a perfect frenzy of wrath and abuse. I told you that he was very jealous in his temperament, but words are powerless to describe the passion of that hour. I was stunned and bewildered by it and by what I had already endured, and I could only sink into a chair and sit in helpless silence to wait for the storm to pass.

"Poor Monsieur Delorme was driven from the house with a torrent of scathing words such as I have never listened to before, and it came out that my husband had suspected his visits to me for some time; that he had left his business to watch the house, and had seen him come and go many times. Monsieur attempted to explain, but not one word was he allowed to utter, and was at length thrust ignominiously into the street, after which my husband, exhausted by his passion, betook himself to the library and locked himself within. I waited for a while for his wrath to cool, and then went down to explain the whole affair. I could gain no admittance; my husband would not even respond to my request for admittance.

"For three days this went on; no word passed between us, and I was nearly frantic with grief and fear. I knew I was innocent of any wrong, and yet I knew that my husband believed I was guilty of encouraging the young artist, and had allowed him to speak words to me such as no wife should listen to from a man who is not her husband.

"On the evening of the fourth day my husband walked suddenly into my room and threw down a package of legal-looking papers upon the table. He was positively frightful in his stern and relentless bearing.

"*'There, madam,'* he began in a cold, inflexible tone, *'those represent what will give you a handsome maintenance as long as you live; take what I offer you, make the most of it, enjoy it, if you can, but from this hour we part forever.'*

"I cried out in despair at this stern decree, for I loved my husband most fondly. I threw myself upon my knees before him and begged him to listen to me.

"*'I have already heard enough,'* he said grimly, *'more than enough, Heaven knows, in listening to what passed between you and your artist lover.'*

"I protested that he had not heard a word from my lips—that it was my right to defend myself, and he had no right to condemn me unheard.

"He laughed a bitter, horrible laugh; he spurned me with his foot, turned, and left the room, and I never saw his face afterward.

"All night long I lay awake. Toward morning I fell into a deep sleep, and it was very late when I at length awoke, and then I was impressed with the strange silence that pervaded the house.

"'What is it? What does it mean?' I asked myself.

"I could not tell. I rang my bell. My maid presently appeared, but she was weeping.

"'What is it?' I cried in alarm.

"She burst into tears afresh.

"'My baby!' I gasped, fearing some ill had befallen my darling.

"'Oh, madam, what shall I say?' the girl said, wringing her hands.

"'For mercy's sake, tell me what has happened!' I demanded, calmed for the moment by the intensity of my suspense and fear.

"By degrees I drew from her the fact that my husband had left his home in the early morning, had taken our little one with him, and no one was able to ascertain whither he had gone.

"I was wild over this unprecedented outrage; I was almost like a maniac for a time, until I exhausted my strength, and lay helpless in my grief and misery. Then, as I grew able to think more calmly of my future, I determined what I should do. I never could remain in London, and no one must suppose, if I could help it, that my husband had forsaken me. I examined the papers he had given me, and found that he had made over to me the house in which we lived, with its furniture and adornments, also the horses and carriages in the stable, together with an income sufficient to support me in a luxurious manner.

"I put my house and all it contained, my horses and carriages into the hand of a broker for sale, and then began my roving. For ten years I kept it up, and I believe I have been almost everywhere, but without the least success. I have never gained any tidings of



my loved ones. I finally came to the conclusion that they must be dead. Then I came back to America for the last time. I remained in New York for five years. I went to California for two; spent several months in Philadelphia and Boston, and finally, last winter, came here at the earnest solicitation of some friends, and have liked Chicago so well that I decided to remain here indefinitely. My dear, my tale is told."

"Dear Mrs. Archibald, it is, indeed, a sad, sad story," Gertrude said, with tears in her eyes, as the lady concluded, and yet she could not help wondering why she, a stranger, should have been sent for to listen to such a strange romance.

"What is your judgment of me, my dear?" Mrs. Archibald asked in a low, wistful tone.

"I am sure you were guiltless of any wrong," Gertrude replied, but surprised that she should be so anxious for her opinion.

The lady leaned forward, seized Gertrude's hand, and raised it to her lips, touching it gratefully, caressingly.

"I suppose I ought to tell you that my true name is not Mrs. Archibald," she added, after a moment.

"Ah!" exclaimed Gertrude, while she thought it very singular that they two who resembled each other so closely should be living under false names.

"No, dear; I said I would never be known by my husband's name again until I could find either him or my child, and vindicate myself in their sight. My friend"—and Gertrude wondered to see the woman's lips grow so white and tremulous, and wondered, too, that she did not tell her what her name was—"would you like to see the man who ruined my life so ruthlessly in his mad jealousy, yet whom I have always loved, notwithstanding?"

"Yes," Gertrude said, for she thought her companion wished her to see it; yet in her heart she felt that it would not be a pleasant face to look upon.

"Well, dear, just step to the mantel yonder, over which hangs a curtain; pull that cord that hangs at one side, and you will see."

Gertrude arose to obey; but her companion laid a detaining hand upon her arm even then.

She turned and looked into her face, and was surprised to see how deeply agitated she was.

"Do not judge too harshly," she said earnestly; "remember that I loved him, that I love him yet, and would gladly welcome him now, if—he were living and could come back to me. It was his passion—the violent temper—that made him so unreasonable with me."

"Then you have heard that he is not living?" Gertrude said.

"Yes, but very recently; I have known it only a very little while."

Gertrude turned to the mantle, a peculiar feeling suddenly coming over her. She took the heavy tassel in her hand and pulled aside the silken curtain that stood before the picture, thus revealing the two-thirds portrait that was beneath.

Instantly a low, startled cry broke from her lips, and her face became deathly pale. For one moment she gazed at that fine, high-bred, but rather stern-browed face; then she turned a frightened, questioning look upon the beautiful woman who lay upon the couch watching her with breathless interest.

"My father!" Gertrude gasped, and then sank helpless and faint upon the nearest chair.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### A HAPPY REVELATION.

For a moment or two Gertrude could neither move nor speak, although she was conscious of the sound of weeping in the room. Then suddenly she felt herself infolded in a close embrace. Soft lips kissed her forehead, her cheeks, her lips; tears rained upon her glossy brown head, and a sweet, tremulous voice murmured:

"My child, my child! I have found you at last. I have suspected it from the hour when we met at the opera, and now the blessed conviction has come to me."

"I cannot comprehend; I am bewildered," Gertrude breathed, her dazed glance still fastened upon the picture before her.

She had a photograph of her father, taken when he was a few years older than this portrait represented him to be, but the features, the form, and bearing were identical, and she could not fail to recognize him at once.

"I do not wonder, dear," her companion returned, kissing her tenderly again; "and perhaps it was just a trifle cruel of me to give you such a shock, but I could not make up my mind to claim you as my child without being quite sure. I said to myself, 'If she recognizes the picture, then I may safely tell her that I am her mother; if she does not, then I have made a mistake, and it were better not to have committed myself.' But, my darling, you have recognized your father, and there can be no doubt, only there are some things that I cannot comprehend. First, your calling yourself Helen Richards; and second, your being obliged to give lessons in painting for your support. My heart owns you, claims you as my daughter, and if that is so your name is Gertrude Helen Wynn; Richards was my name before my marriage, however. Your father's name was Archibald Wynn, and he was a very wealthy man; so you should have a large fortune at your command instead of having to teach. I have called myself Mrs. Archibald, dropping the latter name, Wynn, because, after my husband left me, I would not be known anywhere as his wife. Now, my love, if after listening to my story, which I solemnly declare I have truthfully related, you do not deem me unworthy of your respect and love, will you call me 'mother,' and share with me henceforth all that I have?"

The beautiful woman's lips quivered, her eyes were full of tears, and she leaned toward Gertrude with out-

stretched hands in an eager, appealing attitude that was inexpressibly touching.

Gertrude turned her eyes from her father's face at that question, and looked into the eyes that were so earnestly seeking to read her own.

For one long minute they seemed to gaze each into the other's very soul.

Then Gertrude arose, clasped her arms around the fair woman's neck, laid her cheek against hers, and murmured, with melting tenderness:

"My mother! Yes, I believe you are. Oh, how I have longed for my mother all my life!"

Then she laid her face upon her mother's shoulder, and burst into tears.

Subsequently Gertrude told her mother her eventful story, closing with a touching and graphic recital of the varied experiences of the last twelve or fifteen months.

It was a thrilling story as we all know, and Mrs. Wynn listened with interest to the end.

When she proposed to send for her trunks to be brought there immediately, Gertrude willingly acquiesced.

"Yes, indeed, I shall stay with you," she said fondly; "at least, until Allan comes to claim me, as I feel very sure he will, and then we must make our home where he says. At all events we will never be parted again while we both live."

While this happy reunion was taking place between Gertrude and her mother, Allan had been speeding south as fast as steam and wheels could take him.

He had felt it a great trial to be obliged to leave the city before coming to some definite understanding with Gertrude. He had even been tempted to wait over one train to see her, but the thought of his father dying among strangers determined him to lose no time in going to him, while he felt reasonably sure that a little delay in his reconciliation with Gertrude would make no material difference with their future relations.

His ruse in obtaining Brown Bess for her to ride had been entirely successful. He had conceived the idea during their first ride, when he had observed how she petted and talked to her horse, and the next morning he had posted off to Livingstone Elms and secured her own pony, which, although she was getting somewhat old, was still a spirited and beautiful saddle horse. It had been a happy thought, too, his bringing away her own riding whip, and he had watched her with the keenest interest when she came out to join him, all unsuspecting of the neat little trap that he had laid for her.

He reached St. Augustine just at dusk one evening, and, hastening to the address that had been sent him, inquired anxiously for his father. He was told that he was failing, though suffering in no way save from weakness. He insisted upon going to him immediately.

"Allan, you have come!" were the eager words that greeted him the moment he opened the door of his father's room. "I heard your step outside, and knew it—you have come just in time, my boy."

The two men clasped hands, and in that brief moment, as eye looked into eye, all bitterness that had ever lived in either heart melted away, and the love of earlier and happier days came back in its place.

Allan was shocked at the change in his father. He was terribly emaciated, and weak as a little child. It was only too evident that he was rapidly passing from earth. He greeted him cheerfully, but his heart sank as, slipping his fingers over the fluttering pulse, he realized how swiftly the tide of life was ebbing.

"Father, why have you not sent for me before?" he asked, with tender reproach.

"Because, though I have known for some time that there was no hope, I would not bind you to a fretful and whimsical invalid."

"But I would have come gladly. I would have left everything else to minister to you, had I known."



"Yes, I do not doubt it. You were always a dutiful boy, Allan. But tell me, my son, have you any tidings of Gertrude?" the sick man concluded, with wistful eagerness.

"Yes, father, at last I have."

"Thank Heaven, the last thorn will be removed from my pillow if I can know that all will be well with her in the future. Tell me about her."

Allan related all that had transpired since his return from Europe—he had kept his father posted regarding his movements while abroad—how he had seen Gertrude's picture at the exposition, and knew by that that she must be in Chicago; how he had traced her, following up his suspicions until he had proved them all true by his ruse with Brown Bess.

"Allan," Mr. Livingstone said, one morning, nearly a week after his son's arrival, "I believe I shall tell you something which I once thought would be better for you never to know. But since I have lain here, I have come to the conclusion that there should be no secrets to mar your life and that of Gertrude. There is a bare possibility that you might hear it from some one else, and it might affect your relations with her."

"What do you mean, father?" Allan demanded, bending a keen but startled glance upon the sick man.

"It is something concerning Gertrude's mother. Archibald Wynn told me the sad story when he came, a heartbroken man, to leave his child in my care. He begged me never to let the knowledge of it touch her life if I could help it. But I think I ought to tell you, and you can use your own judgment about revealing it to her. You, and nearly everybody else, have believed that Mrs. Wynn died when her child was two years old; but such was not the case. There was a terrible disgrace."

"A disgrace!" Allan interrupted, a hot flush rising to his brow.

"Yes; but of course the child was not to blame. Do not, pray do not, let it affect your feelings toward Gertrude. An artist, a Frenchman, was mixed up in it,"

and Mr. Livingstone related the circumstances as they had occurred.

Allan sighed. The facts, as represented by his father, were very much against Archibald Wynn's fair young wife; and yet, somehow, there was a yearning in his heart toward her.

He sat in thought for some time; then, all at once, he started up, a strange expression upon his face.

"I believe she is in Chicago at this moment!" he exclaimed, in a tone of conviction.

"Who?" inquired Mr. Livingstone, looking surprised at his son's unusual manner.

"Mrs. Wynn, or—Mrs. Archibald, as she calls herself," Allan responded, and then he told his father of the woman whom he had first seen at the opera, and afterward at Mrs. Preston's, who resembled Gertrude so strikingly.

"I should not be surprised if you were right in your suspicion," Mr. Livingstone remarked, "and if so I hope for Gertrude's sake that she can prove that she has been guiltless of any wrong. Her calling herself Mrs. Archibald looks as if she was still clinging to the old life. But I am weary—this talk has excited me and I must rest."

Allan blamed himself for having allowed his father to talk so long, and hastened to arrange him comfortably for a nap. But he was not as well after that day; the feeble ray of life had flamed up brightly for a little, only to burn out more quickly afterward. He failed steadily during the week that followed, and one evening fell quietly asleep just at sunset, and slipped—Allan knew not just when—from earth's receding banks to the other shore.

Another week was spent in bearing the loved dead back to the home of his fathers, where he was laid beside the wife who had ever been his idol and the charm of his home; and when these last sad duties were all performed, Allan turned his face once more toward Chicago and the hope of his future.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### AFTER FIVE YEARS.

The morning after Gertrude's return to her mother, she dispatched a note to Mrs. Overton, explaining something of the wonderful discovery she had made, and requested that her trunks might be sent at once to Mrs. Archibald's residence, as that would be her home for the present. Mrs. Overton immediately ordered her carriage and went to her, to express verbally her sympathy and congratulations.

Gertrude presented her mother shortly after Mrs. Overton's arrival, and the three ladies had a pleasant chat of more than an hour.

At last Mrs. Overton arose to go, and Gertrude accompanied her to the door.

"I hope," said her friend, "that you will let me come to you, and you will come to me often. I cannot bear to lose you, Gertrude. Your mother, too, is lovely, and I shall be glad to know her better."

Gertrude thanked her, and then inquired for Blanch and the children.

"They are all well, though Blanch has not, of course, yet regained her equilibrium. Pray forgive her, my friend, for her unkindness to you."

"I do, freely; but I blame myself for much of the sorrow that has come to her," Gertrude said sadly.

"Do not reproach yourself. Blanch, although she is a dear sister in many respects, has always been somewhat wayward whenever she was crossed. Perhaps, however, this trial may prove a blessing in disguise, and serve to bring out some strong points in her character. At all events she will soon go away, and then you will feel free to come to us as you like."

"Do you mean that Miss Van Ausdel is going to leave Chicago?" Gertrude asked, with some surprise.

"Yes. She and mamma agreed upon a trip abroad last night, and they will leave in about three weeks."

Mrs. Wynn improved every day after the reunion with her daughter; the light of a new joy shone in her eyes, a smile of tenderness and love was ever on her lips, and she could not bear to be separated from her even for a single hour.

When one morning Gertrude insisted that she must go to her studio, at least for a little longer, until she could finish the present quarter with her pupils, Mrs. Wynn said, "then she should go also, for the days would seem endless without her."

So every day after that the two beautiful women drove down to the studio together, where Gertrude instructed her pupils and worked diligently at Mrs. Livingstone's portrait, while Mrs. Wynn reclined in a comfortable chair by a sunny window, watching the young life around her, and seeming happy and content.

Thus the weeks of Allan's absence passed. One Saturday, however, Mrs. Wynn was detained at home by a matter of business with her lawyer, and Gertrude went alone to work on the portrait.

It was almost done, and she wanted to finish it before evening. The face was completed, and there were only a few details about the dress and surroundings to be worked up, and then it would be ready for Allan's verdict.

There came a knock upon the door after a time.

"Come in," Gertrude said, and it was a habitual form of expression, for so many pupils were in the habit of coming at all hours.

She glanced up as the door opened.

The post boy stood upon the threshold, with some letters and papers in his hand.

"Oh, you have some mail for me," she continued, with a smile. "Won't you please step in and lay them on my table? I am very busy, and do not want to get up."

She had turned back to her work almost before she ceased speaking, too interested even to look at her letters.

The boy obeyed her request and went out again, but Gertrude paid no heed, nor had she noticed that another figure had followed him into the room, and remained after the door closed upon him.

Suddenly she was startled by the sound of a voice close beside her.

"There is only one person in the world who could have painted this picture," it said, in a low, intense tone.

Instantly she sprang to her feet, palette and brushes falling unheeded upon the floor, and turned her white face and frightened eyes upon the speaker.

"Allan!" she gasped, the name she had been dwelling upon all day escaping unawares.

"Yes, it is Allan, and you are Gertrude," he said, a gentle reproach, yet a world of tenderness, in his tone, while his face had grown radiant at the sound of his name from her lips.

A lovely confusion covered her; her bright head drooped with sweet humility; her lips trembled; and she stood before him revealed, confessed at last.

He reached forth his hands to her, in an appealing way—his heart in his eye, his lips quivering with the agitation he could not control. But some perverse influence sent Gertrude's mind wandering back to her wedding-day; to that tortured hour, when, sitting in the hammock outside the library window, she had heard Allan tell his father that he had "ruined his life;" that he had forced him to marry "an ignorant, unformed girl—a veritable dowdy" and something of the old bitterness and rebellion came back into her heart for a moment over the remembrance.

Her face grew white and pained; a shiver ran over her slender frame; a sob came up into her throat, choked her; then burst from her trembling lips. Instinctively Allan seemed to understand what was passing in her mind.

"Gertrude, darling, forgive, come!" he pleaded.



She could resist him no longer. She knew he loved her with all the fervor of his great manly heart.

A rosy flush—"celestial red, love's proper hue"—leaped over neck, and cheek, and brow. She lifted her clear, steadfast eyes, and looked for one brief instant into his, then laid her clasped hands upon his outstretched palms.

With a glad cry, with his whole face transfigured with joy, he drew her toward him, and folded her close to his heart.

"My love! my love! at last you are mine indeed. Oh, Gertrude, it has been a wretched, weary time of mourning and waiting since I came home and found you gone," he said in a broken voice.

She was sobbing now upon his breast. It was indeed all over at last; the weary waiting, the toil, the mystery, the doubt and pain; the burden of the past five years was all rolled from her heart; a future of joy and blessing awaited her; and her overflowing heart could only find vent in happy tears.

Allan bent and kissed her lips. It was the first lover's kiss that he had given her, and she had borne his name for more than five years.

"I do not deserve such happiness as this," Allan said, after they had talked over the past a little. "I feel that I have wronged you in many ways, my darling, but most of all in keeping you in ignorance of the change that gradually came over my feelings toward you. But there never was a word in all your letters, dear, to tell me that one spark of your old affection for me remained. They were very proper and entertaining, but very icy, Gertrude."

"I could not thrust my love upon you—I did not even wish to remind you that we were bound to each other."

"I understand, and I know that it belonged to me to make the first advance toward a change in the tenor of our letters. I wrote much more freely to my mother than to you. I wonder she never repeated what I said."

Gertrude straightened her slight figure.

"She was far too wise to do that; she knew I would have resented hearing through another what belonged to you alone to say to me," she said proudly.

Allan laughed softly. He admired her all the more for this little show of spirit.

"And it would have been but just for you to resent it," he said. "But, Gertrude, I believe I really began to be a trifle afraid of you after a while, when I saw how you were going ahead and realized something of your mental calibre."

"Perhaps I owe to you, after all, the impetus which drove me to study," Gertrude said musingly. "I always hated books, you know, but after you said—after my illness nothing seemed too difficult for me to accomplish in the way of lessons."

"I am afraid you owe me nothing, my dear," Allan replied sadly; "when I think of the cruel things which you overheard on the day that should have been the brightest you had ever known, and realize how nearly they cost you your life, I feel very guilty. But if you could have known that what I wrote in my last letter to my mother—I mean those words that wounded you so—was but the fear of a loving yet doubtful heart, you would never have hidden yourself from me during all these long months."

Gertrude looked up at him questioningly, a sudden flush upon her cheeks.

"I do not quite understand," she said. "You certainly wrote that you dreaded to meet me—dreaded to claim me."

"Oh, Gertrude, if you had only read the whole letter!"

"I could not, Allan. I would not have taken such a liberty for the world. I would not even have read one word, but I could not help seeing that one line as I took the letter from your mother's dear hands, after she was gone, to lay it away in her desk with the others."

"Would you like to read it now?" Allan asked, as he drew a letter from his pocket. "I have brought it to

you. I have carried it with me everywhere while searching for you, to prove, if I should find you, that my love is not a new or sudden growth."

"I do not need any proof, Allan. I believe you," Gertrude said softly.

"Bless you, my darling," he cried, in a glad voice, "but you shall read the letter, nevertheless; read the whole of it, for it is full of you."

He unfolded it and laid it in her hands, and she read it through. It was, indeed, full of his hopes, and plans, and love for her, and a tremulous smile broke over her lips as she read, though there were tears in her eyes when she gave it back to him.

"I am glad to know that you began to love me before——" she began, then suddenly stopped and flushed a vivid crimson.

"Before what?"

She had almost said, "before you knew of the great change in me;" but now she said:

"Before you discovered that Helen Richards was Gertrude Wynn."

"No, not Gertrude Wynn," Allan interrupted, "but Gertrude Livingstone—my wife."

The hours slipped by, and still they talked on, oblivious of the time and place; the unfinished portrait forgotten; the waning sunlight, that told of the day's speedy close, ignored and unheeded.

All the past was told and discussed, heart spoke to heart, and perfect harmony and confidence were at last established between these long-parted lovers.

Gertrude related the history of her mother, and gave an account of their recent reunion, and then Allan told her something of what his father had revealed to him regarding Mr. Wynn's misunderstanding and desertion of his young wife and child.

He had resolved that there should never be any secrets between them; no cloud of doubt or distrust should cast a shade upon Gertrude's pathway again, if it was in his power to prevent it.

"I am glad you are pleased with your portrait,"

Gertrude said, as she carefully covered the canvas preparatory to leaving the studio.

"It is perfect," Allan replied, "and it will be doubly dear to me because you have painted it. Gertrude, I am very proud of my cultivated and talented wife. But there must be no more of this toil. Henceforth you must occupy your proper position in life. If you paint it must be simply for your own pleasure."

Gertrude smiled assent to this, and the western sky was not brighter than her lovely face as she went out from her studio, leaning upon her husband's arm, and feeling that henceforth her life would be tenderly guarded by his love and care.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THREADS GATHERED UP.

Mrs. Wynn was somewhat startled upon the appearance of Gertrude and Allan together; but she rejoiced that the reconciliation was complete and her daughter's future happiness assured.

The evening was passed in talking over the events which so deeply concerned the speakers and discussing the future.

"Gertrude, where do you wish to live?" Allan asked, after the romance of their lives had been thoroughly rehearsed; but she little dreamed how he had dreaded to ask that question, or how he waited for her answer.

"Anywhere with you, Allan," she replied, with a shy, sweet smile.

He flushed with pleasure at her answer, and a glad light shone in his eyes.

"Would you be content to remain in Chicago?" he questioned.

"Yes, if you think best."

"Have you no preference? Is there no one spot on the earth that you would choose before another? or would you like a trip somewhere?"

Gertrude looked up wistfully into her husband's face, hesitated a moment, and then said:

"We were so happy at Livingstone Elms."

"Then home to The Elms we will go," Allan said joyously, "only I shall have to go and get ready for you first—it must be a very cheerful home-coming for my wife."

"Will not Doctor Fosdick regret to lose you?"

"Doubtless; but he must find some promising young physician to take my place. And now, about the time for going home. Truly, Gertrude, now that I have found my wife I am at a loss to know how to claim her," Allan concluded, laughing, yet looking a trifle disturbed as well.

This did seem to be quite a puzzling question, and it was some time before they could settle it. Gertrude was extremely sensitive, and recoiled from the thought of having all Chicago know the history of her previous relations with Allan. They could not be explained in any way without causing a great deal of gossip, and making them both unpleasantly conspicuous before the public. Allan, too, thought it would be unwise to have the story noised abroad, and yet could not readily suggest a way of avoiding it.

Mrs. Wynn finally conceived a way out of the difficulty.

"You have proposed, Doctor Livingstone, to go to make some changes in your home before taking Gertrude there," she said. "Why not announce immediately that she is soon to become your wife? Call it an engagement if you will. You have told me that only Doctor Fosdick and the Overtons know that you are already married; and, as I understand, it was a matter of confidence with them, which, of course, they will not violate. I really do not feel that the ceremony which made Gertrude, at sixteen, your wife, was much more than a mockery, and so I propose, for the sake of avoiding gossip, that you marry your wife again from her mother's house. It can be a private wedding. That would be eminently proper since you have so re-



cently suffered bereavement. We will invite the Overtons, your friend, Doctor Fosdick, and perhaps one or two others—Gertrude's friends, who know something of her life, and then you can go at once to Livingstone Elms, if you like."

"Gertrude, what do you say to the plan?" Allan asked.

She looked grave.

"I do not approve of anything that seems like a farce or a sham connected with sacred things," she answered thoughtfully.

"It need not be a 'farce.' It will not be a 'sham.' It will be very real to me, I assure you," Allan said soberly. "What do you say," he added eagerly, "to my going to the old rector at home, and confiding everything to him—then let him make the ceremony what he chooses? He will know just what would be right and proper."

"That is well thought of," said Mrs. Wynn, "and it will save asking a stranger to be present at what will be almost a family affair, and it will not, therefore, need to be conducted with quite so much formality."

And thus it was decided. It was at once announced that Gertrude would, in the course of a few weeks, become Mrs. Livingstone, and immediately congratulations poured in upon her from every quarter.

Allan settled his affairs with Doctor Fosdick, who was deeply grieved to part with him, but, of course, saw and acknowledged the wisdom and necessity of his leaving. Then Allan repaired to Livingstone Elms to make ready for the reception of his wife.

He consulted with the old rector, who heartily approved the plan that Mrs. Wynn had proposed to prevent gossip and notoriety, and consented to go on to Chicago and pronounce the benediction upon the new relations the young couple were to assume.

Allan, however, could not be content to remain long away from Gertrude; and, giving his instructions regarding the repairs and refurnishing of his home to a competent man, he returned to Chicago, after an absence of a little more than a week.

Meantime Gertrude's pupils had been dismissed, and her studio closed, and in some mysterious way it became known that she had recently come into possession of a large fortune through the death of some relative, though just whom no one seemed able to tell.

The twentieth of December had been set for the ceremony, and then the happy couple were to go to Rose Taylor's home, to be present at her wedding, which was to occur on the twenty-fifth.

So Gertrude would not miss seeing her friend married, after all, and Rose was wild with delight over the fact of her coming.

Gertrude had written to her immediately after her reconciliation with Allan, giving particulars of all the wonderful things that had so recently happened to her, and then, when it had been decided what day Allan would publicly claim her, she had written again of that event.

"Can't you come to me, Rose, for the twentieth?" she asked. "It seems as if you ought to be here to share my happiness, for, indeed, I am supremely happy. It will be a very quiet affair, and there will be no one here who will criticise your coming, notwithstanding you are so soon to be a bride yourself."

And Rose declared she "would go, etiquette or no etiquette." She would go so quietly that no one need suspect her absence. She could not deny herself the pleasure of being with Gertrude on that most important occasion, and hearing from her own lips more of the romantic occurrences of the last year.

Rich and elegant gifts poured in upon Gertrude during that last week in Chicago. Her pupils could not do enough to show their regard for her, while Mrs. Abbot and Mrs. Preston, besides others for whom she had sung, sent beautiful testimonials. Mr. and Mrs. Overton presented an elegant set of pearls, Beth and Florence an exquisite golden bouquet holder. Blanch and her mother had already sailed, but Mrs. Van Ausdel left an expression of her esteem and good

will for the beautiful girl, whose presence in her daughter's house had been such a pleasure to her.

The twentieth of December arrived. The good old rector from The Elms went through a simple service in an impressive manner; and, as Allan stood beside Gertrude, with her hand clasped in his, and listened to the earnest, tremulous tones of the aged man, he could not help feeling that this was the real marriage that made them one.

Gertrude was wondrously beautiful in her pure white satin, with its rich lace flounces, and only lilies of the valley in her hair and on her breast. She would have no veil or orange blossoms.

"I have worn them once, I will not wear them again," she said; but no bride was ever more fair than she, with that sweet, grave look in her wonderful eyes, and that tender gleam of perfect happiness on her face.

"My wife, now and forever! I pray I may ever be worthy of this great gift," Allan said, when, after the breakfast was over, he drew her for a moment aside into a little room, and clasped her in a fond embrace; and there were tears in his manly eyes as he spoke.

The young couple were to go to New York that afternoon to pay Aunt Marcia—Miss Frothingham—a little visit. That lady had not been able to come to Chicago to be present upon this joyful occasion, but had sent her tenderest love, and expressed a desire to see them just as soon as they could make it convenient to come to her. From New York they were to go to Rose Taylor's home, which was only a short distance from the city, to be present at her wedding on the twenty-fifth.

A short time before Allan and his wife were to leave, a box was left at Mrs. Wynn's door for Doctor Livingstone.

Upon examination, it was found to contain a beautiful piece of foreign statuary, representing Cupid in pursuit of Venus.

Accompanying it was a letter expressing Mr. and Mrs. Webster's best wishes and heartiest congratula-

tions at his success in having at last found his wife—they having surmised that such was the case upon hearing the name of the lady whom, report said, he was about to “marry.” The letter also stated that just after Allan left them in London to return to America, a telegram, dated three months previous, and which had been following them from place to place, had come, informing them of the death of young Mrs. Webster’s husband, who had been drowned while sailing upon Lake Michigan. They had returned only a week previous, but they hoped that the acquaintance so pleasantly begun with Doctor Livingstone abroad might be renewed at home.

Allan was much pleased with this token of remembrance, and had a good laugh over Mr. Webster’s cleverness in his selection of a subject.

He replied at once to the kind letter, verifying their suspicions regarding Gertrude, and giving them all a hearty invitation to visit himself and wife when they should be settled in their home at Livingstone Elms; but he was destined to meet one of them before that.

Rose Taylor’s wedding was a large and brilliant affair. Everything that love could suggest and abundant means provide for was done to promote the happiness of the lovely girl, and the future promised to be a very bright and joyous one.

Gertrude met many of her old schoolmates upon this occasion, and while they were surprised to learn that the report of her sad fate had been a false one, no one appeared to think it strange that she was the wife of Doctor Livingstone. The opinion prevailed that she had been an adopted daughter of Mrs. Livingstone, and had married her son.

Gertrude was talking with Mrs. Taylor a little while after the ceremony, when she saw a gentleman, accompanied by a lady, all in black, approaching her.

A second glance showed the former to be Mr. Frank Winthrope. The lady was a stranger to her, but she was surprised to see her husband start forward with

extended hand and greet her most cordially, while the beautiful woman blushed consciously as she returned his salutation.

"Mrs. Livingstone, I am most happy to meet you under such auspicious circumstances," said Mr. Winthrope, smiling, "and," he added significantly, "I trust you will acknowledge now that I was a true prophet."

"Yes, indeed, I will," Gertrude answered, with a charming smile; "but why did you not call on me in Chicago, Mr. Winthrope?"

"Because I was called out of the city on business the day after meeting you at Mrs. Preston's, and have not been there since. But I have brought a friend to introduce to you," he added, turning to attract his companion's attention. "Mrs. Webster, Mrs. Livingstone."

Gertrude started at the name, then the two ladies clasped hands and gazed earnestly into each other's face.

Gertrude knew instantly that this must be the beautiful woman whom Allan had followed, believing her to be his wife, and she had felt a great curiosity to meet her ever since hearing the story.

Gertrude learned from Rose, later, that her cousin had met Mrs. Webster in Paris shortly after her own departure; that he had been attracted toward her, first, because she reminded him somewhat of Gertrude, and afterward, because of her own loveliness of character. Immediately upon learning of her husband's death, he had sought her again, and he had recently confided to Rose the fact that, when a proper time should elapse, he intended assuming a nearer relation to her. It was at his request that she had been invited to be present at the wedding, as he desired to present her to his friends.

Gertrude renewed the invitation to Mrs. Webster and her friends to visit her when she should be settled in her home, and she promised herself much pleasure in knowing her better.

The return to Livingstone Elms was delightful. Mrs. Wynn had gone on before to see that everything was in order, and to be there to welcome the young couple upon their coming.

As soon as they were somewhat refreshed from the journey, Allan led Gertrude from room to room, to show her his improvements, and see if they met with her approbation. When they came to the library, the first things that greeted her eyes were his mother's portrait and her exposition picture—"That Dowdy."

Allan saw her look of surprise and flush as her glance rested upon them.

"Next to my wife these are the two things that I prize most in my home," he said, drawing her toward the two pictures.

"I can imagine that you would prize your mother's portrait, Allan," Gertrude replied gravely, "but the other—will it be pleasant for you to have it here, where you will have to see so much of it?"

He drew her to him and kissed her fondly.

"I hung it here because I wished to gaze upon it frequently," he said. "My darling, I never wish to forget that the same pure and noble soul looked forth from the eyes of the playmate of my youth as now beams upon me from the wife whom I adore. I would not part with this picture for any consideration."

And in after years the scene which Allan Livingstone gazed on oftenest, and with growing affection, was the picture of—"That Dowdy."

THE END.



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Details of the establishment and destruction of the Moravian "Village of Peace" are given at some length, and with minute description. The efforts to Christianize the Indians are described as they never have been before, and the author has depicted the characters of the leaders of the several Indian tribes with great care, which of itself will be of interest to the student.

By no means least among the charms of the story are the vivid word-pictures of the thrilling adventures, and the intense paintings of the beauties of nature, as seen in the almost unbroken forests.

It is the spirit of the frontier which is described, and one can by it, perhaps, the better understand why men, and women, too, willingly braved every privation and danger that the westward progress of the star of empire might be the more certain and rapid. A love story, simple and tender, runs through the book.

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